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**THE ROOTS AND EVOLUTION OF THE ROYAL  
AUSTRALIAN NAVY**

by

Richard D. Butler

June 2007

Thesis Advisor:	Daniel J. Moran
Second Reader:	Michael S Malley

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**THE ROOTS AND EVOLUTION OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY**

Richard D. Butler  
Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy  
B.A., University of Rochester, 1995

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
June 2007**

Author: Richard D. Butler

Approved by: Daniel J. Moran, PhD.  
Thesis Advisor

Michael S. Malley, PhD.  
Second Reader

Douglas Porch, PhD.  
Chairman, Department of National Security  
Affairs

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis investigates the roots and evolution of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the circumstances that have shaped Australian maritime policy since WWII. Its primary purpose is to provide present day policy experts with historical insights useful to the planning of future relationships with Australia and her Royal Navy. In essence, this topic's intent is to assist in the formulation of United States maritime policies that will achieve optimal global results through the thoughtful engagement and proper support of Southeast Asia's predominant maritime power.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

During the last half of the twentieth century, The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) played an increasingly important role in ensuring stability in Southeast Asia (SEA). The RAN waged war alongside the United States Navy (USN) in Korea and Vietnam and now stands with the USN in Iraq and Afghanistan. Australia's Royal Navy is a professional and proficient force, a fact that sets it apart from most of its regional neighbors. However, its forces, which are smaller in size than those of many of its neighbors, are tasked with protecting the approaches of the only continental maritime nation which is dependent on seaborne trade for its welfare and prosperity. Awareness of the circumstances and constraints faced by the RAN over the years, as well as an understanding of its efforts to maximize its capabilities during the current era of rapid global change, is essential when considering future collaborations with this valued naval ally in a service, joint or coalition role.

An analysis of three sets of literature helps frame the issues that have determined the RAN's evolution and proves valuable in forecasting how the RAN will be shaped in the future. These are: (1) Australian diplomatic history; (2) Australian military history; and (3) Australian economic policy and military capacity. It is more useful to examine how these literatures flow together and interact than to discuss them individually, since each focuses more or less exclusively on the characteristics associated with its particular field of research. Economic

and diplomatic histories, for example, may not mention the Navy at all, while military histories tend to gloss over diplomatic and economic events. Examining the literatures of a time period together rather than separately gives the researcher a broader and deeper view of how the events and circumstances of each field worked in concert to shape the RAN.

Following World War II, the Australian government sought to safeguard its national security through an alignment shift from the United Kingdom to the United States.<sup>1</sup> Correct interpretation of the relationship between the two superpowers (one rising and one declining) and their island nation cousin is important to achieving an understanding of both Canberra's and the RAN's frames of reference. The bipolar world of the Cold War largely dictated how Australia would fit into the new regional and global construct. Early writings, especially those of Sir Percy Spendor<sup>2</sup>, indicate the increasingly urgent need for Australia to form strong maritime and diplomatic relationships in opposition to the growing threat of the

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<sup>1</sup> The evolution and importance of this relationship is variously discussed in works published between the 1950s and the 1990s. Notably: Henry S Albinski, *ANZUS, The United States and Pacific Security*, (University Press of America, Lanham, 1987); Richard W Baker, ed, *Australia, New Zealand and the United States: Internal Change and Alliance Relations in the ANZUS States*, (Preager Publishers, Westport 1991); Richard W Baker, ed, *The ANZUS States and Their Region: Regional Policies of Australia, New Zealand and the United States*, (Preager Publishers, Westport 1994); Glen St. James Barclay and Joseph M Siracusa, *Australian-American Relations Since 1945*, (Holt, Reinhardt and Winston, NSW, 1976); Jacob Bercovich, ed, *ANZUS in Crisis: Alliance Management in International Affairs*, (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1988); Norman D Harper, *Australia and the United States*, (Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1971); Trevor R Reese, *Australia, New Zealand and the United States: A Survey of International Relations 1941-1968*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1969); Sir Percy Spendor, *Exercises in Diplomacy: The ANZUS Treaty and the Columbo Plan*, (Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1969); J. G. Starke, *The ANZUS Treaty Alliance*, (Melbourne University Press, Victoria, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> Sir Percy Spendor, *Exercises in Diplomacy: The ANZUS Treaty and the Columbo Plan*, (Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1969).

Soviet Union. Canberra increasingly aligned with the United States to maximize its influence through ANZUS and subsequently SEATO. This alignment naturally extended to the RAN as new naval acquisition programs came online throughout the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> The procurement of platforms and arms from the United States was of paramount importance.<sup>4</sup>

This new strategic relationship was not one in which the two allies always reached harmonious accord. Disagreements over geopolitical issues in French Indochina, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan and during the aftermath of the Vietnam War all had a significant impact on the nature of the relationship and the closeness of the alliance.<sup>5</sup>

Strong national security was important not only to protect Australia from the Soviet menace, but also to guard against sub-regional threats. Expanding communism in the newly decolonized countries of Southeast Asia was a great concern; and Britain's slow withdrawal from Southeast Asia did not merit full-time attention from Washington, who made

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<sup>3</sup> This evolution is detailed in the official history of the RAN and other private works: Peter G Edwards, *Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-1965*, (Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1992); Peter C Firkens, *Of Nautilus and Eagles*, (Hutchinson of Australia, Victoria, 1983); T. R Frame, James V. P Goldrick, and P. D Jones, eds, *Reflections on the RAN*, (Kangaroo Press, 1991); David Stevens, ed, *Maritime Power in the Twentieth Century: The Australian Experience*, (Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, 1998); David Stevens, ed, *The Royal Australian Navy* (Oxford University Press, S. Melbourne, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> The first signs of this shift were published publicly in 1957. Refer: *NYT*, April 5, 1957, 5:3.

<sup>5</sup> Good references for these issues: Dept of State telegram, DULTE 48, May 3, 1954, accessed via the Declassified Documents Reference System, Dudley Knox Library, Naval Postgraduate School; United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations website ([www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co\\_mission/unsfbackgr.html](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/unsfbackgr.html)) accessed 05 Dec 2005; Australian Government Dept. of External Affairs, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, 33, no. 5, (1962), 5-7 cited in J. G Starke, *The ANZUS Treaty Alliance*, (Melbourne University Press, Victoria, 1965); Alex Tewes, Laura Rayner, and Kelly Kavanaugh, *Australia's Maritime Strategy in the 21st Century*, (Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Section, Australian Parliament: 2004).

it clear on numerous occasions and across multiple administrations that Australia should deal with regional crises not vital to the national interests of the United States. This position was allowable within the framework of both ANZUS and SEATO, and the Australian government itself made similar assertions regarding what comprised the "Pacific area."<sup>6</sup>

The policy framework of alignment with the United States remains in place today, and Australia's outstanding performance as a primary ally in the GWOT is evidence of the fact that her national interests continue to overlap extensively with those of the United States. Historically, the result of this strategic foundation, as it relates to the RAN, was the creation of a naval force designed to carry out two distinct missions. The first mission was to defend the Australian homeland from direct, non-Soviet threats; the second was to integrate with and support the United States during the Cold War. The second mission should be viewed as an extension of the first.

Economic policies and domestic military capacities also played a critical role in determining how the RAN evolved. Managing the construction, training and manning of successive generations of fleets to accomplish the above-mentioned maritime missions have posed significant challenges for RAN leadership. The RAN's primary historical constraints include: (1) economic limitations; (2) military-industrial complex limitations; (3) inter-

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<sup>6</sup> The term repeatedly used in the ANZUS Treaty to lay the boundaries of mutual coordination, cooperation, defense, and consultation.



service rivalry/joint integration issues; and more recently (4) Canberra's increasingly effective use of "soft power" to conduct foreign policy.

Economic scarcity helped insure the success of the ANZUS alliance, but it also had the effect of restricting spending on naval production. Australia's naval budget remained more or less constant throughout the Cold War, during which time the percentage of Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) earmarked for naval spending was paltry compared to the fiscal outlays of the British and the Americans.<sup>7</sup>

The relatively small population of Australia has also restricted the size and shape of the RAN. Even though the nation's population has grown threefold between 1946 and today, it's military recruiting pool remains small in view of the large area that the RAN must defend. Additionally, the need for human capital to drive Australia's economy has historically been substantial, further depleting the prospective recruiting pool.<sup>8</sup>

An additional factor shaping the RAN has been the Australian military-industrial complex's lack of support for the building of ships larger than modern-day frigates and destroyers.<sup>9</sup> The production of each new generation of complex surface ships and aircraft was time-consuming; and

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<sup>7</sup> Eric J. Grove, "Advice and Assistance to a very independent people at a most crucial point: the British Admiralty and the future of the RAN 1958-60," in David Stevens, ed, *Maritime Power in the Twentieth Century: The Australian Experience*, (Allen and Unwin, NSW, 1998), 138; NYT, May 5, 1954, 10:5.

<sup>8</sup> Covered briefly in David Stevens, ed, *The Royal Australian Navy*, (Oxford University Press, S. Melbourne, 2001). Historical trend in labor shortages discusses in: Jonathan J. Pincus, "Government" in Rodney Maddock, and Ian W. McLean, eds, *The Australian Economy in the Long Run*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Covered in Naval histories listed in footnote 3.

most of the technology since the advent of missiles and microprocessors, as well as the necessary designs and expertise, has come from the United States (with the exception of submarines).<sup>10</sup> Prior to that time, technology and know-how had been provided by the British Admiralty. Because of these factors, investing in the military served only to protect Australia, rather than stimulate economic growth within the country, resulting additional incentive to minimize defense expenditures.

The natural outgrowth of Australia's minimal expenditures on national defense was inter-service competition for funds. An example of this rivalry was the fiscal battle between the RAN and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) over the Fleet Air Arm that began in the 1950s. The two forces came to budgetary blows again following the Vietnam War and the collapse of SEATO, an event that helped sound the death knell for carrier fixed wing aviation and ushered in a more joint maritime strategy focusing on "Continentalism." Canberra shifted its focus to a strategy of "Self Reliance," rather than that of "Forward Defense" in coordination with the United States.<sup>11</sup> The vigorous debate between the services over the Fleet Air Arm was not unlike America's "revolt of the Admirals" in concept, although not in action. It was an attempt by each service to construct a new maritime strategy to its own advantage.

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<sup>10</sup> Covered in Naval histories listed in footnote 3. Also: Jeffery Grey, *Up Top: The Royal Australian Navy and Southeast Asian Conflicts 1955-1972*, (Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, 1998), 17; Asia-Pacific Defense Reporter, Sep 2005, 6-8.

<sup>11</sup> Although covered in varying degrees in the historical texts, a very good comparison and explanation is offered in Laura Rayner and Kelly Kavanaugh, *Australia's Maritime Strategy in the 21st Century* (Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Section, Australian Parliament: 2004).

In the future, the mission of the RAN may slightly increase in scope through the addition of new missions. For example, addition of a small amount of modern amphibious expeditionary lift will greatly increase the effectiveness of the RAN in dealing with small regional crises and in supporting the GWOT in SEA.<sup>12</sup> The idea of this new RAN resource to may even be met favorably by its sister services, since the addition will enhance their own capabilities as well. However, this new capability may come at the cost of the traditional role of defending the homeland, putting it at loggerheads with a mainstay of Australian military planning. Given these constraints, the RAN will not be able to increase its military power substantially in relation to that of other middle power navies, let alone to face down a regionally hegemonic maritime power.

Canberra clearly recognizes that "soft power," as Nye discusses,<sup>13</sup> is the key to future success in the region. This fact is primarily attributable to the end of the Cold War and the rapidly increasing globalization of both economies and information. Complementary, low cost and perceived as low risk, the use of soft power has become an important tool in Australian foreign policy actions given the significant alliance setbacks suffered by the British withdrawal east of the Suez, the creation the European Union, the Nixon Doctrine, the rise of newly independent

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<sup>12</sup> Australian Government, Dept. of Defense, *2006-2016 Defense Capability Plan* (Public Version) accessed at <[http://www.defence.gov.au/dmo/id/dcp/DCP\\_2006\\_16.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/dmo/id/dcp/DCP_2006_16.pdf)> on 23 Feb 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (Perseus Publishing, New York: 2004), Ch. 4.

countries in the area, and both China's and India's continued rise as a regional power in East Asia.

China is seen as the most significant challenger in the region, and a survey of Australia's growing economic, political and social ties with the increasingly powerful People's Republic of China (PRC) supports this premise. It is simply not in Australia's national interest to move toward military confrontation with Beijing. Observers might theorize that Australia is merely following the lead of the United States in ensuring the peaceful rise, or successful containment, of China. This shared direction is indeed happy coincidence, but it should be noted that Canberra opposes using ANZUS in support of a United States application of force in the Taiwan Strait and also that Australia initiated diplomatic and economic relations with the PRC at a pace that left the United States looking lethargic.

Effective use of soft power decreases the need for a large naval force presence, SLOC protection or amphibious assault, thereby limiting the need for a larger, more potent navy in relation to other regional states or middle powers outside the region. Canberra uses soft power to obtain what its military cannot, while also hedging against a possible future U.S. power vacuum. If the USN were to withdraw from East Asia, it is highly unlikely that Canberra would, or could, produce a true blue water power projection fleet.

While American resolve to remain militarily engaged in the region is not likely to wane for the foreseeable future, current events in the Global War on Terrorism may

foreshadow political and social fallout in Australia, notably over Iraq and Afghanistan, which could produce unfavorable changes in the current maritime strategy and therefore the RAN's future modernization. In the absence of a traditional threat, the Australian government might simply increase its reliance on the use of soft power and return to focusing on protection of the homeland and its approaches from asymmetric attack. In this scenario, Canberra would use multi-lateral peacekeeping and stability operations along with limited anti-access and strike warfare techniques close to home, but would be less willing to risk the lives of its military members or to expend significant resources for Washington's vision of the Global War on Terrorism.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Navies exist solely to exercise their nations' policies at sea; their forces operate within the guidance and constraints dictated by their governments. Over the course of a maritime nation's history, radical changes occur in the platforms, technology, personal skill levels, and missions for which its navy was developed. These changes are not made for the sake of change alone, but are instead the result of deliberate decisions that mandate alterations in key characteristics of the service. The specifics of such decisions are the result of consultation between naval and civilian leadership and are firmly rooted in pre-existing governmental policy. In essence, and within the constraints imposed by existing force structure, which in the nature of things can only change slowly, determinations are made that continually reconstruct the navy in the image that most closely suits the national interest at that particular time.

The foundation for the modern RAN was laid following World War II. The considerations that shaped that foundation have continued to exert influence over the years that have followed. The shape of the RAN was then, and remains today, dependent on the Australian government's interpretation of internal and external factors as they relate to the nation's vital interests and national policy decisions. Without a working knowledge of how these factors affected the shape of the RAN, the United States will be unable to understand the changes underway in the Australian Navy today.

This thesis seeks to analyze the development of the RAN by means of a series of historical case studies which highlight the major forces and episodes that have progressively altered its missions and structure since its founding over half a century ago. These "snapshots" will examine the factors that set the Royal Navy's foundations, identify and analyze significant turning points in its evolution, and detail the most dramatic developments in its nature and composition. The periods that will be described are: (1) the years between Korea and Vietnam, (2) the post-Vietnam era up to the decommissioning of the RAN carrier, and (3) the end of the Cold War to the present. A chapter is also dedicated to discussion of Australia's current preference for the use of soft power over the option of military might, a strategy designed to curb accelerating military expenditures while hedging against the rising power of the PRC. This relatively recent policy direction has assumed increasing prominence over the past ten years.

Primary sources consist of official government publications and documents of both Australia and the United States. The investigation will also include interviews and statements from public and military officials.

Secondary sources include the works of researchers, historians and others who have documented the circumstances responsible for the evolution of the RAN. Cited material will include historical, diplomatic and economic writings.

Other sources include journals, periodicals, newspapers, websites and other open source materials that highlight Australia's use of soft power, particularly in relation to the time period between the end of the Cold War and the aftermath of 9/11.



## **II. ESTABLISHING NEW ROOTS: THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY BETWEEN KOREA AND VIETNAM**

Between 1953 and 1964, significant military and diplomatic events decidedly shaped the course of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Over little more than a decade, the RAN became the pre-eminent sea power among the countries of Southeast Asia (SEA). Geopolitical events in SEA between the end of the Korean War and the escalation of the Vietnam War provided the impetus needed to maintain and often expand RAN force capabilities and training levels, transforming the service into the dominant navy in the region as the British slowly disengaged from the area and as the United States became less able to play a full time role. The resulting need for a strong and active navy overcame Canberra's desire to limit military spending following the Korean War and even surmounted inter-service mission competition, particularly with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), for those limited funds.

Throughout the period, both RAN and the Australian government learned to better understand the strategic framework and limitations of Australia's alliances. Additionally, as Australia recognized that their ability to act independently was important to the preservation of the nation's vital interests, the need for a strong, diverse, regional navy became increasingly evident. Australia developed the ability to successfully engage allies on items of mutual benefit, while also acting independently in the region.

The genesis for Australian maritime power can be found in three specific diplomatic initiatives: The Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS), the

Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and its associated security treaty (SEATO) and the Australia, New Zealand and Malaya area agreement (ANZAM).

ANZAM was conceived in 1950 in response to the Malayan Emergency, a long period of communist guerrilla actions which began in June 1948 and ended in July 1960. Through ANZAM, Britain hoped to stabilize the Malayan area by unifying her former colonies, including the newly formed Federation of Malaysia. An additional tangible effect of ANZAM for the Australians was that during war, the ANZAM organization would be administered by the Australian Defense Committee. Eventually the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) was formed in 1955, showing continued British and Commonwealth resolve in the area and supporting the newly created SEATO alliance. The FESR formalized the deployment and integration of British, Australian, and New Zealand military forces to the ANZAM area, in effect transforming ANZAM's ad hoc agreement into a standing military force.

ANZUS, signed in 1951, allowed Australia to align with the United States for protection. A defensive alliance, it was originally a guarantor of protection against a remilitarized Japan. However, in reference to the context in which history would unfold, it is important to note that on both sides of the Pacific, the treaty was soon viewed as an alliance for protection against the encroachment of communism. In Australia, for example, at the same time that the ANZUS treaty was signed, the Australian Parliament passed a bill to contain the Communist Party. The spread of "red nationalism" would quickly dominate the alliance and its actions. Although ANZUS was never intended to include a NATO-like standing military structure, it did

allow for direct consultations during crises and stipulated that the alliance applied to territorial threats, a proviso which would become important after Indonesia took control of West New Guinea from the Dutch.

SEATO, formed in 1955, was expressly dedicated to the containment of communism. This was explicitly put into a written addendum added by the United States, whose purpose was to avoid being pulled into small regional conflicts. SEATO's defensive security pact was the vehicle by which the ANZUS agenda was executed. ANZUS remained important to the Australians because it provided a unique and close forum in which the Western allies could conference separately and also at higher levels of classification. For example, ANZUS allowed the Americans to share nuclear defense information with the Australians which would not be made available to other allies.<sup>14</sup>

After the Korean War ended in mid-1953, Canberra began to question the wisdom of continued defense spending, especially for naval expenditures. This was not due to a change in government, as the conservative Liberal-Country Party had been in power since 1949 and would remain so until 1972; Robert Menzies served as Prime Minister continuously from 1949 to 1966. Rather, other factors drove this developing problem for the RAN. Modernization of the fleet, especially the two aircraft carriers and their air wings, would be exceptionally difficult and expensive. Australia's carriers, *Sydney* and *Melbourne*, were purchased shortly after World War II from Britain's excess pre-commissioned inventory. Certain modernizations were completed, including a steam catapult and angled deck on *Melbourne*. Work on both carriers was significantly

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<sup>14</sup> *NYT*, July 13, 1957, 18:2.

delayed in the yards and only *Sydney* was ready in time to support the Korean campaign. At delivery, both carriers and their air wings were already outdated and the ships were unable to handle the modern jet aircraft that the British and Americans were starting to field.

The same factors held true for the rest of the navy. The RAN combatant force was small, old, and outdated. It was not suitable to support modern weapons systems or command suites, and inadequate to support the protection of high value units from attack by modern weapons. The minesweepers were aging and insufficient in quantity, while the patrol force was almost non-existent.

The diplomatic successes represented by ANZAM, ANZUS and SEATO also factored into downplaying the importance of having a well-rounded navy. The RAN's official position proposed maintaining and modernizing the two carriers and building up the combatant forces to protect them. However, the government deemed this to be economically unfeasible, asserting that defense spending had to be brought under control since it had grown dramatically since the end of World War II.<sup>15</sup>

In 1959, prior to the Australian Chief of Naval Staff's visit to London to discuss strategy and future procurement, the Admiralty's Plans Division internal briefing summarized the Australian problem quite succinctly:

...being girt by sea and having no inland frontiers to protect, Australia is compelled to regard the sea itself as the first and last line of defense...a fact which successive Australian governments and the Australian people have failed to acknowledge and it is the reason why they only

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<sup>15</sup> *NYT*, May 5, 1954, 10:5.

allocate one quarter the percentage of their gross national product to their navy as compared to the percentage the Royal Navy receives.<sup>16</sup>

However, Prime Minister Menzies believed that the best way for Australia to support her more powerful allies would be to maintain a robust economy, which meant keeping defense spending under control.<sup>17</sup>

The RAAF also made strong appeals for funding which were not unlike those put forth by the U.S. Air Force at about the same time. The RAAF, supporters argued, should invest heavily in technological advances and force upgrade. According to RAAF proponents, the air force would then guarantee the defense of the island nation and execute any mission the navy and her fleet air arm could, for less cost and less loss of material. The fallacies of this argument will not be lost on modern military analysts. The RAN attempted to demonstrate that the RAAF did not have the reach or capacity to support over sea missions like anti-submarine warfare or continuous anti-ship patrol, nor to ensure air power projection capability anywhere in the region, as only the carrier battle group could. However, the argument contributed ammunition to the negative debate surrounding the future of the navy, especially at a time of decreasing defense budgets.

By 1958 many experts, most from outside the RAN and including the British Admiralty, suggested that the navy focus only on missions in which the Australians could provide support to the British and Americans as primary allies to these larger powers. Possible missions in this

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<sup>16</sup> Eric J. Grove, "Advice and Assistance to a very independent people at a most crucial point: the British Admiralty and the future of the RAN 1958-60," in David Stevens, ed, *Maritime Power in the Twentieth Century: The Australian Experience*, (Allen and Unwin, NSW, 1998), 138.

<sup>17</sup> *NYT*, May 5, 1954, 10:5.

scenario were seen as coastal defense, minesweeping, frigate escort for the transports and high value units of the allies, and anti-submarine warfare (ASW). ASW was particularly important at that time because Soviet submarines had recently become very active in the Pacific. Initially, a decision was made to disband the fleet air arm and decommission the carriers (*Melbourne* was still active, but *Sydney* had already become a training ship). However, within a few months, the decision to scrap *Melbourne* and the fleet air arm was rescinded. Given the growing importance of the ASW mission, the decision was made to turn the fleet air arm into a rotary wing surface that could prosecute submarines. Again, however, the cost associated with maintaining or modernizing the fixed wing air defense, strike and ASW capability was deemed not cost effective.<sup>18</sup>

The navy's emergence as a fully mission-capable entity was limited by a variety of considerations. The first real restraint was that the United States wished to be recognized as the dominant power throughout the Pacific Rim. The sun was continuing to set on the British Empire, and Australian-American ties, which had emerged even before 1945, had continued to grow long before the Suez Doctrine of 1969, which announced the formal withdrawal of the remaining British forces stationed in the region and the closing of the naval base in Singapore. Australian defense acquisition changed dramatically in 1957, when Prime Minister Menzies announced:

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<sup>18</sup> Eric J. Grove, "Advice and Assistance to a very independent people at a most crucial point: the British Admiralty and the future of the RAN 1958-60," in Davis Stevens' book, *Maritime Power in the Twentieth Century: The Australian Experience*, (Allen and Unwin, NSW, 1998), 135-155.

Common sense dictates that in these circumstances we should pay considerable attention to the logistic aspect of war and standardize, so far as we can, with the Americans. Though this is whole-heartedly a British nation, this policy isn't heresy—it merely recognizes the facts of war.<sup>19</sup>

The slow withdrawal of Britain from Southeast Asia meant that only the United States could be relied upon to come to Australia's aid in the future. Australia recognized that America was a powerful ally and knew that the Yanks and Aussies would almost certainly be fighting side by side during any major regional or world conflict. However, the American preoccupation with the communist threat emanating from the Soviet Union meant that it could not be expected to provide support to smaller regional disputes. Three examples support this statement.

The first example is the "United Action" plan of 1954, in which Washington sought an ad hoc alliance with Paris, London, Canberra, and Wellington to relieve the French garrison under siege at Dien Bien Phu. In this situation, the Australians were caught in the power vacuum between the Americans and the British, who did not support the initiative. Australia saw it in their best interest to support the Americans but still had close ties to the British and also had a Parliamentary election pending; Canberra was forced to officially support the British position.<sup>20</sup> The idea of "United Action" never got off the ground. The concept was not important enough to Washington for the U.S. to implement without the support of her major ally, Great Britain.

<sup>19</sup> NYT, April 5, 1957, 5:3.

<sup>20</sup> Dept of State telegram, DULTE 48, May 3, 1954, accessed via the Declassified Documents Reference System, Dudley Knox Library, Naval Postgraduate School on 20 Feb 2006.

Secondly, the Indonesian-Dutch dispute over West New Guinea from 1961 to 1963 showed that the United States would not wholeheartedly back an issue the Australians viewed as vital to their national interest. The Netherlands wanted to maintain control over its last possession in the West Indies until the area could govern itself, while the Indonesians argued that West New Guinea should be part of their nation. The Dutch moral ground was that the inhabitants were a minority population which needed protection until able to live independently. Australia viewed Dutch control as vital to their national interest because the Indonesians were viewed as having communist sympathies, and West Irian was adjacent to Australia's protectorates and only a few hundred miles from the Northern Territories. However, the United States would not support the Dutch position and forced the issue into the United Nations for resolution. The solution was for a United Nations police force to control the area for a year to ensure stability and then transition control to the Indonesian government.<sup>21</sup> Washington's answer to Australia's security concerns was in the Eisenhower administration's unequivocal statement that the ANZUS treaty would apply if Indonesia attacked the Australian territory of Papua and New Guinea.<sup>22</sup>

The third example is the "Confrontation". In 1963, before the United Nations turnover of West New Guinea to Indonesia had taken place, the Indonesian-Malaysian Confrontation began. This low level guerrilla-style

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<sup>21</sup> United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations website <[www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co\\_mission/unsfbackgr.html](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/unsfbackgr.html)> accessed on 20 Feb 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Australian Government Dept. of External Affairs, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, 33, no. 5, (1962), 5-7 cited in J. G Starke, *The ANZUS Treaty Alliance*, (Melbourne University Press, Victoria, 1965).



conflict dragged on until 1966, after the Australian involvement in Vietnam had escalated. Units of the FESR were responsible for helping the Malaysian government defend its sovereignty. The United States viewed this action as the responsibility of the parties affiliated with ANZAM and declined to intervene. They also did not agree that an attack on Australian military personnel would invoke ANZUS. Again, the signal was sent -- Australia must be prepared to act independently in certain crises.

These events, which demonstrated Washington's reluctance to involve itself heavily in Southeast Asia's regional disputes, led Canberra to choose a more pragmatic course for the RAN. Australia needed to protect its vital interests when the United States could not or would not. The Menzies government drew a clear line between the nature of the Cold War (or the GWOT that could escalate from it) and less significant regional conflicts. Based on these real world decisions, the Royal Australian Navy set about conforming to the new strategic vision. These actions were not taken all at once, but were cumulative between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s.

With the decision to discontinue fixed wing naval aviation, the navy determined to build air defense destroyers, which moved the navy into the missile age. *Adams* class destroyers designed and built in the United States were selected for several reasons. The foremost reason for the selection was that the *Adams* class provided a better mission match than the *County* class destroyers proposed by the Admiralty. The most attractive selling point was the *Tarter* missile system, for which the British had no equivalent. Purchasing U.S. ships was more cost-effective than performing the redesign necessary to

retrofit the British design to the American weapons system. The *Adams* class ships would also allow complete integration into the U. S. Navy supply system within which the vessels expected to operate. The Americans were also more conducive to bargaining, and the salesmanship of the Americans was much more graceful.

At that time, plans were also made to purchase new escort/ASW frigates or to upgrade existing ones. The growing importance of ASW led the Aussies to purchase and operate their first submarines in 36 years. A lengthy selection process resulted in the purchase of six *Oberon* class diesel boats from the United Kingdom; after lengthy discussion, the initial contract was finally signed in 1967. The boats were not American since the United States no longer built diesel boats and the RAN had no need for nuclear-powered attack submarines. The purchase of the submarine force was made in anticipation of the withdrawal of the British submarine squadron stationed in Sydney.<sup>23</sup>

The refocus on the littoral, especially after the Malayan Crisis and the Confrontation, persuaded the RAN to invest heavily in new minesweepers and patrol ships, some of which were indigenously produced. During both conflicts the existing ships and their crews were stretched to the limit, because they were needed both as replacements and to decrease operating tempo.

In a final re-evaluation of the need for a fully mission-capable navy, the fleet air arm was able to keep its fixed wing aviation, including the *Gannet* ASW aircraft and *Sea Venom* fighter. In 1965, after several years of debate, the decision was made to upgrade to more modern

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<sup>23</sup> Jeffery Grey, *Up Top: The Royal Australian Navy and Southeast Asian Conflicts 1955-1972*, (Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, 1998), 17.

aircraft that could operate on the small deck of the *Melbourne*. The selected aircraft were American because of the nations' close ties and the availability of airframes; A-4 *Skyhawks* and S-2E *Trackers* were picked up by *Melbourne* in the United States in 1967 and remained in service until *Melbourne* decommissioned in 1982.<sup>24</sup> These aircraft were not the most modern but, combined with the correct training, were more than a match for any regional enemy.

The combination of good training and fully operational equipment should not be underestimated. Even at its reduced state of force levels, with fatigued and aging platforms, during the Confrontation the RAN was more than a match for the Indonesian navy, which was supplied some of the newest equipment the Soviets could offer, both in quality and quantity. Despite their low levels of funding and continuous manpower constraints, the RAN made sure its people were trained and that equipment worked properly. The combination proved successful in ensuring the navy could meet all assigned missions, both in support of its allies and if called upon to act independently.

The RAN also grew in regional prestige by maintaining a balanced force which could project itself in the region. This was proven not just during operations, but also through engagement with other nations, taking the form of traditional visits as well as participation in numerous exercises in the Pacific Rim through its alliance with SEATO. Often, the RAN would staff and run the exercise since the USN was often unable to free up a carrier. This provided RAN officers and crews with valuable integration as well as command and control experience. Australia's

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<sup>24</sup> Australian Government Royal Australian Navy website  
<[www.navy.gov.au/spc/history/ships/melbourne2.html](http://www.navy.gov.au/spc/history/ships/melbourne2.html)> accessed on 3 Mar 2006.

navy gained the ability to plan and execute modern naval warfare, setting the stage for future generations of RAN alumni.

Geopolitical events forced the Royal Australian Navy to become a regional maritime power. Although the government initially did not foresee that occurrence, external influences overcame inter-service rivalry and domestic economic concerns. The slow shift of power brought about by the eventual withdrawal of Great Britain as a power in the region, the continuous threat of communism, the rise of Indonesia, and the need to ally and integrate with the United States during the Cold War forced the government of Australia to expand and modernize its navy in order to protect its national interests.

### III. NAVAL EVOLUTION IN THE AGE OF SELF-RELIANCE

During the Vietnam War, the RAN performed extremely well in support of her superpower ally. Australia's Navy contributed destroyer support to the gun line in South Vietnam as well as rotary wing assets and ordnance disposal units in support of the First Australian Task Force (1ATF) in Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> In addition to casualties suffered inland while supporting the 1ATF, *HMAS Hobart* was struck by multiple Sea Sparrow missiles launched from a U.S. Air Force F-4 on patrol off the coast of Vietnam.<sup>26</sup> This unfortunate friendly fire event demonstrated how dangerous modern air assets with precision guided weapons could be to ships-of-the-line.

In contrast, the strategic assets of the RAN did not play a part in Southeast Asia's escalating conflict. Submarines were of no use in a Third World land war, and the *Melbourne* was unable to come to American assistance early in the effort due to the refit and reequipping of the fixed wing assets that were being procured from the United States.

Additionally, it was determined that Australia's newly retrained A-4 pilots would be unable to integrate with the American command and control architecture and that the A-4 in its stripped down, bare bones Australian form would be outmatched in the intense air defense environment which prominently featured some of the newest surface-to-air missiles in the Soviet inventory.

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<sup>25</sup> David Stevens, *The Royal Australian Navy part of The Australian Centenary History of Defense, (Vol III)*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 203-208.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

The British were in the final stages of the announced withdrawal of their forward deployed forces from Southeast Asia. NATO defense obligations were the UK's primary concern and were all the once great empire could now afford. British intent was to leave a token force in place in Singapore and Malaysia, in coordination with her regional commonwealth allies. Eventually called the Five Power Defense Agreement (FPDA), a new force structure called ANZUK was created. Since only a small British naval force remained on station, the overall force level was significantly lower than that maintained as part of the Far East Strategic Reserve. The RAN contribution to this force was only a rotating surface ship and an occasional submarine deployed to the force in Singapore.<sup>27</sup>

Unfortunately for the RAN, the slogan "All the Way with LBJ"<sup>28</sup> heralded the beginning of the end of the concept of political-military forward defense that had grown since the inception of ANZUS. As the Vietnam era dragged to a close, Australia faced significant domestic challenges at home and a changing geo-strategic environment that drastically reshaped the foundations of Australia's defense. In turn, this affected the course of the RAN between the end of the Vietnam War and the early 1980's, a period generally described by the politicians and strategists of the era as being the beginning of "Self-Reliance". The time was marked by a more inwardly focused defense policy whose primary concern was the direct defense of Australia. The first hints of this change had come by

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<sup>27</sup> David Stevens, *The Royal Australian Navy part of The Australian Centenary History of Defense, (Vol III)*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 212-214.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Steketee, "All the Way at Full Steam," in *The Australian*, 23 Nov 2006, accessed at <[www.news.com.au](http://www.news.com.au)> on 10 Feb 2007.

the late 1960s during discussions in government circles that were held as Vietnam began to look more and more like a mistake. In 1969, Australia decided that the time had come to announce that her troops would be pulled out of Vietnam at some time in the future.<sup>29</sup> The concept was codified in the first Defense White paper of this new period, published in 1972.

As is common in democracies, unpopular wars lose elections. In December 1972 Australia's Labor Party, under Edward Whitlam, came to power for the first time in 23 years. One of the planks in the party's platform was to institute a more independent foreign policy. As a result a slight dip in defense spending occurred, along with a general downward trend in military procurement which would last until the mid-1970s.<sup>30</sup>

Even after the return to power of the Liberal-Country Party in 1975, the tenor of self-reliance was further amplified by the 1976 Defense White Paper's phrase "to ensure that the Defense Force can be supported and maintained in Australia, utilizing for the provision of equipment and material, a combination of local industry, (and) selective and reliable overseas sources of supply."<sup>31</sup>

Not only did the politicians "down under" view this as a new era in defense planning, the strategists, planners,

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<sup>29</sup> 1ATF withdrawal was initially announced in 1969 and was completed in 1971. The RAN contributions to the American war effort ended this same year.

<sup>30</sup> Desmond J. Ball, "Equipment Policy for the Defense of Australia," in Robert O'Neill, *The Defense of Australia: Fundamental New Aspects*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1976), 99.

<sup>31</sup> Australia Department of Defense, *1976 Defense White Paper*, quoted in L.G. Randell, "Australian Defense Industry," in David Stevens, and D. M. Horner, eds, *Australian Defense Policy for the 1980s*, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 232.

and analysts did as well. The foreign policy genesis of this sentiment can be found in the 1969 Guam (or Nixon) Doctrine, which stipulated:

--First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments.

--Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our national security.

--Third, in cases involving other types of aggression, we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.<sup>32</sup>

In hindsight, this would appear to be the restatement of an already articulated point of view that had been made repeatedly during the early years of the ANZUS alliance. However, a survey of the period material indicates that at the time, the idea of Washington not playing an active role in all aspects of the ANZUS region, particularly in Australia's "neck of the woods," was considered not only important, but entirely new. This is a particularly interesting given the number of times Washington refused to support Canberra on significant issues in the 1950s. In this case it appears that historiography may not match actual history.

The RAN, however, seems to have seen the world from the 1950's perspective as they put forward an aggressive

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<sup>32</sup> United States, Office of the Federal Register, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 1969*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), 905. This speech was presented by President Nixon to the nation on Nov. 3, 1969 and amplifies his initial remarks made during a brief stop in Guam on Jul. 25, 1969.



procurement plan in 1973, one that included the desire to obtain "two small aircraft carriers, which the navy termed seaborne aircraft platforms, eight submarines, seventeen destroyers, one amphibious helicopter assault ship, one amphibious transport, two maintenance ships, and ten patrol boats."<sup>33</sup> The navy still clearly saw itself as a highly mobile force capable of both defending the homeland and projecting force in the region as necessary. However, this plan was in shoal waters even at the time of its announcement.

The American ground force withdrawal from Southeast Asia and the Guam Doctrine prompted a restructuring of the Australian Defense Force (ADF) in line with the emerging strategy of Self Reliance. Under defense reforms made between 1973 and 1975, the services were unified into the newly created Department of Defense.<sup>34</sup> This established greater civilian control over all the uniformed services and moved the Navy into a position of supporting the establishment of a unified military strategy. Previously, as an individual service, the Navy had the freedom to determine appropriate naval strategy and the necessary procurement of forces, and also had direct liaison and integration with foreign navies to implement that strategy. This sense of individuality existed in all the services, tracing its roots to the time of Federation when each national service was required to meet the wartime needs of the British Empire. As described in the previous chapter,

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<sup>33</sup> David Stevens, *The Royal Australian Navy part of The Australian Centenary History of Defense (Vol III)*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 216.

<sup>34</sup> A good summary, among many, is W. L. Morrison, "The Role of the Minister in the Making of Australian Defense Policy Since the Reorganization of the Department of Defence," in Robert O'Neill, *The Defense of Australia: Fundamental New Aspects*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1976), 71-87.

naval decisions were neither made in a vacuum, nor without the sea service being required to justify its position to the government. However, the formation of a unified defense establishment, composed of both military and civilian entities which had both strategic and budgetary control, largely removed decision-making from the hands of the RAN and its token Minister of the Navy. Prior to this reform, Navy Admirals had exerted significant control over even the Minister. As a result, naval developments essentially went directly to the cabinet level.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Navy's primary goal was to align with the hegemonic power rather than to integrate with the other Australian services. The new strategy, in combination with the new unified services organization, often put the Navy at odds both with the other services and with the Minister of Defense, who submitted recommendations to the cabinet for each year's defense vote.

The unified services reform also created the position of Chief of the Defense Force Staff (CDFS), who had direct access to both the Defense Minister and the Prime Minister. Service parochialism and exclusion of naval concepts could easily be construed as a possible weakness of this new joint architecture. This is not to say that a CDFS from a different service branch would not be impartial, but the Navy certainly would feel more at ease when one of their own was at the helm of the defense staff during the early years of being a "joint" service.

Given the failure of hard power in Vietnam, the RAN also faced increased budgetary constraints as political will bent more toward the use of soft power. Parliament's

upper house strongly endorsed this idea in 1976. In summarizing the role of the country in its region, the emphasis and first recommendation was placed on "political, diplomatic, trade, aid, and cultural initiatives to ensure the peaceful development and stability of the region." <sup>35</sup>

Perceived direct threat to Australia was also low in the 1970s. The continuously expressed estimate was that any regional threat to Australia was 10-15 years away.<sup>36</sup> It was easy to agree that only the United States and Soviet Union could pose a direct threat to the Australian continent in a conventional war, and that the chance of nuclear war was remote given the current parity and retaliatory capability between the superpowers.

Australia was entering what today we would call "capabilities-based planning." In a brief 1993 essay, author Thomas-Durell Young referred to the process as "Threat-Ambiguous Defense Planning." Young encouraged the U.S. military to examine the Australian experience for lessons learned as the post-Cold War world unfolded.<sup>37</sup> The RAN struggled with the new concept, one that ultimately would impact the number of capital ships and missions performed by the RAN.

This new threat re-assessment signaled the belief that wielding soft power was less expensive than military aggression and also fit more appropriately into Southeast Asia's emerging geo-political situation. As Washington and

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<sup>35</sup> Australia Parliament, *Australia and the Indian Ocean Region*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Office, 1976), 203. Similar assertions are made in the 1976 *Defense White Paper*.

<sup>36</sup> Noted in the 1972 and 1976 *Defense White Papers*, 1971 *Report of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs* and various other comments by members of the cabinet-level.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas-Durell Young, *Threat Ambiguous Defense Planning: The Australian Experience*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U. S. Army War College, 1993).

Moscow moved into the period of *détente* during the 1970s, the threat of Soviet expansion was seen as diminishing. Also, the actions of communist insurgencies were seen in a different light. No longer thought to be dominoes falling to the will of the Soviets or Chinese, these insurgents were viewed more as nationalist movements independent of extreme outside influence. By the mid-1970s, while the loss of South Vietnam and the invasion of Cambodia were not irrelevant to Australian foreign policy, they were no longer viewed as immediate threats to national interests, as their prospect had been in the mid-1960s. Canberra had been enlightened by the knowledge that diplomatic and economic influence could play a more moderate and positive role in the region.

The insurgent and conventional military threat posed by Indonesia had also drastically changed since 1965, when a military coup removed President Sukarno from power. By 1966 Indonesia's close ties with the PRC were severed and the back of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) broken, circumstances that allowed the United States and her Pacific allies, including Australia, to enact a myriad of measures aimed at opening Indonesia to the West.<sup>38</sup> Australia's contribution to Indonesia during this time was not insignificant. In addition to providing substantial economic aid and investment, foreign military sales and training during this period included *Nomad* short takeoff

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<sup>38</sup> See Richard Brabin-Smith, *Australia's International Relationships with the United States, Indonesia and New Zealand*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 2006), 14-15; Nancy Viviani, "The Sharp Deterioration in Relations Between Indonesia and Australia," in Chris Manning and Peter Van Dierman, eds, *Indonesia in Transition: Social Aspects of Reformasi and Crisis*, (London: Zed, 2000), 123; and John Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hitman*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2004), 20-28.

and landing (STOL) utility aircraft, vehicles, and patrol craft as well as cross-training, exercises, and officer schooling.<sup>39</sup>

Although they couldn't foresee it at the time, the Australians had formed a relationship with their closest possible foe that would last until the present day. President Suharto would remain in power until 1998 and his peaceful (albeit authoritarian) rule would eventually give way to a democratic process. Even Indonesia's military invasion of East Timor in 1976 was little more than a speed bump on the road to successful bilateral relations, especially in view of the fact that an active Marxist movement existed in the former Portuguese colony.

In stark contrast to the previous Confrontation period, the development of stable relations between Jakarta and Canberra is eminently noteworthy. The relationship was made possible not by any deterrent effect of the RAN, or even of the entire ADF, but rather by the dangerously polarized world of the Cold War, which led to the conscious decision by Jakarta and the Western powers to develop a peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship.

The need for military power did not disappear, however. The RAN continued to conduct exercises and port visits which contributed to Australia's status as a stabilizer in the region and as a participant in ANZUS. During this time it became apparent that SEATO would not exist indefinitely. Its primary function, to contain communism in Southeast Asia, had fallen by the wayside. As a result, Australia chose to end its participation in SEATO

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<sup>39</sup> P.D. Hastings, "Regional Defense Co-operation," in David Stevens, and D. M. Horner, eds, *Australian Defense Policy for the 1980s*, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 129-30.

naval exercises in 1973. However, the RAN remained very active in other exercises throughout the period. For example, the service took part in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises that began in 1971 off the coast of Hawaii.<sup>40</sup> The RAN also participated in bilateral exercises in the Indian Ocean with the American Navy later in the 1970s. These exercises were significant because they extended the Pacific area concept of ANZUS into the Indian Ocean off Western Australia.<sup>41</sup>

During the 1970's the Indian Ocean became an interesting playing field for the two superpowers. The Soviets were working to offset both Chinese and American influence in the region. Their *modus operandi* included instituting full time naval deployments, establishing friendship treaties, conducting various construction projects and gaining diplomatic influence throughout the region. Admiral Gorchakov's fleet was forward deployed to Somalia, making routine port visits throughout the region. Soviet naval operations kept the lines of communication open between the major Soviet fleets and maintained a watchful eye on the U.S. Navy, whose newly developed Trident missiles were capable of striking Russia if launched from nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines in the Indian Ocean.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> David Stevens, *The Royal Australian Navy part of The Australian Centenary History of Defense (Vol III)*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 229.

<sup>41</sup> These are the Sandgroper exercises. They are held every other year. United States, Department of State, "Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski from Peter Tarnoff regarding Vice President Walter Mondale's trip to Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand," dated 31 Jan 1979, (Washington: Dept. of State, Declassified Document Reference System, declass on 13 Sep 1999) accessed 25 Mar 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Discussed in detail throughout Australia Parliament, *Australia and the Indian Ocean Region*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Office, 1976), 89-128 and Ray Sunderland, *Australia's Changing Threat Perceptions*, (Canberra, Australian National University, 1984), 5-10.

In response, the Americans deployed additional naval units to counter the Soviet presence and also to respond to the growing issue of energy security, which first reared its now-familiar ugly head during the 1973 oil embargo. (It is worth noting that the embargo dramatically impacted the Australian economy as well as that of the U.S. and other nations.) As the world watched, the political situation in the Middle East would only grow worse as Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) disintegrated, Iran succumbed to revolution and the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

In addition to conducting exercises with the Americans, the RAN also began routine port visits to South Asia and East Africa to reinforce the peaceful relations and stability that Australia desired with its regional neighbors.<sup>43</sup> The RAN recognized that, in addition to supporting their Cold War superpower ally, the presence of their naval force and its interaction with the region's coastal nations also would help ensure that the vital sea lanes carrying the vast majority of Australia's goods would remain open and free in accordance with international law. The RAN was particularly good at this function - a core navy mission in peacetime - given their limited resources.

The Navy's mission to "show the flag" also provided a good complement to the bilateral economic support and international aid contributions then being made by Australia to maintain its interests in the region, although it was overshadowed by the concept of self reliance which

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<sup>43</sup> Discussed in detail throughout Australia Parliament, *Australia and the Indian Ocean Region*, (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Office, 1976), 89-128 and Ray Sunderland, *Australia's Changing Threat Perceptions*, (Canberra, Australian National University, 1984), 5-10.

played a greater role in shaping the RAN. During that time, Canberra's various forms of international financial support accounted for approximately 0.5% of GDP, a particularly noteworthy amount. The amount of Australia's 1976 aid package for the region was nearly half that provided by Washington and was significantly eclipsed only by Tokyo's contribution,<sup>44</sup> this at a time when the United States was far and away the world's dominant economy and when Japan, on the cusp of becoming the second largest economy in the world, was limited to using less than 1% of its GDP for defense. For Australia, this particular use of soft power enhanced bilateral relations with any number of nations at a much faster pace, and at less cost, than through the ability to project military might.

Maintaining balance and openness with the nations of SEA while also maintaining a military alliance with the United States was not an easy task. According to a 1976 Australian Senate report, Canberra was forced to strike a compromise between supporting the Western superpower, maintaining close relationships with countries that were openly friendly with the Soviet Union, and with those who wished to create a "Zone of Peace" through the United Nations. Australia belonged to an ad hoc UN working group formed to consider this and other options for the region, and they viewed the concept as a wonderful idea with no chance of success given the bi-polar nature of the world.<sup>45</sup> The idealistic idea of Australia advocating neutrality or actually becoming a neutral party would never overcome its realist need to maintain the superpower alliance with its

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<sup>44</sup> Australia Parliament, *Australia and the Indian Ocean Region* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Office, 1976), 157-163.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-138.



significant benefits. As a result, Canberra routinely called on Washington to reinforce the importance of the ANZUS relationship and the maintenance of America's security role in the region.<sup>46</sup>

After the invasion of Afghanistan, the Australians assumed an even more practical stance by aligning more closely with the United States as *détente* ended and the Cold War heated up for the final time. The circumstances generated still more discussion regarding the type of force necessary to defend Australia, resulting in an immediate increase in defense spending. Given the fundamental nature of the Australian strategy, this loosening of the purse strings did not signal an overall reversion to the forward defense concept. Nevertheless, in November 1982 Prime Minister Ian Sinclair stated publicly that forward defense was "strategically essential"<sup>47</sup>; and the RAN accelerated its patrol boat orders, ordered a fourth FFG-7 class ship from the United States and was allowed to upgrade its air defense destroyers.<sup>48</sup>

The largest single procurement planned by the RAN at this time was a replacement for *Melbourne*, a plan that had been in the works since 1970.<sup>49</sup> Throughout the era the Department of Defense and the Cabinet had routinely

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<sup>46</sup> See period statements located in United States, Office of the President. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1978) and United States, Department of State, Declassified Document Reference System accessed on 21 Feb 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Ray Sunderland, *Australia's Changing Threat Perceptions*, (Canberra, Australian National University, 1984), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Indicative of just how tight the defense budget was, this action deferred the building of the two FFG-7 hulls to be built in Australia until later in the 1980s.

<sup>49</sup> Anthony Wright and Royal Australian Navy, Maritime Studies Program, *Australian Carrier Decisions : The Acquisition of HMA Ships Albatross, Sydney and Melbourne, Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs no. 4*, (Canberra: Maritime Studies Program, Dept. of Defense (Navy), 1998), 165.

approved continuing the plans for replacement. It was anticipated that construction of a replacement would begin in the early 1980s and that *Melbourne* would undergo two more overhauls, be paid off and replaced. The process was not a smooth one. Not everyone agreed that a new carrier was a sound idea. Eventually the plan would fail. It is difficult to list the many arguments put forward to justify the purchase of the new carrier during the thirteen years of debate that preceded the final collapse of the plan. In 1982, Gary Brown and Derek Woolner surmised that the Navy neither successfully articulated why it needed a new carrier, nor fended off the ever-increasing arguments against such an investment.<sup>50</sup> There is little doubt that *Melbourne's* planned replacement was a grand vessel whose presence would indeed offer some merit. However, given the primacy of continental defense as a strategic priority, it is remarkable that the procurement process was able to proceed as far as it did.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Gary Brown and Derek Woolner, *A New Aircraft Carrier for the Royal Australian Navy?*, (Canberra: Strategic and Defense Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1982).

<sup>51</sup> On the subject of the Carrier decision background review: Australia Navy Office, and Australia, *Australia's Navy*, (Canberra: Published for the Department of Defense, Chief of Naval Staff by the Australian Gov't. Pub. Service, 1990); David Stevens, *The Royal Australian Navy part of The Australian Centenary History of Defense (Vol III)*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001) and James A Boutilier, "Get Big or Get Out: The Canadian and Australian Decisions to Abandon Aircraft Carriers," in T. R Frame, James Goldrick and P. D Jones, eds, *Reflections on the RAN*, (Kenthurst, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 1991). For a thorough reading of critic comments review: Gary Brown and Derek Woolner, *A New Aircraft Carrier for the Royal Australian Navy?*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1982); J. O. Langtry and Desmond Ball, *Controlling Australia's Threat Environment: a Methodology for Planning Australian Defense Force*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1979); J. O. Langtry and Desmond Ball, *The Concept of Force Multipliers and the Development of the Australian Defense Force*, (Canberra, Australian National University, 1983); Michael McGwire, *Australia as a Regional Seapower: an External View*, (Canberra, Australian National University, 1979); Thomas B Millar, *Global and Regional Changes and Their Defense Implications for Australia to the Year 2000*, (Canberra, Australian National University, 1980); Robert O'Neill, *Australia's Future Defense Requirements*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1980); Alan Robertson, *The Need for an Australian Aircraft Carrier Capability*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1982).

The RAN asserted that having a carrier would provide the first line of defense for Australia. The carrier task force would also be critical in securing sea lines of communication and protecting valuable cargoes during transport in time of conflict. It was also argued that the carrier was a key part of the ADF "core force"<sup>52</sup> concept since it would provide the necessary fixed-wing capability needed to cope with a future regional peer competitor.

The primary obstacles encountered by the Navy in arguing for their new ship were cost, relative use, and the risks of operating a carrier in the age of precision-guided munitions. The real-world costs of purchasing modern carriers had increased 90% since 1950, and the cost of carrier-based high-performance fighters and attack aircraft had increased by nearly 200% over the same time period.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, the carrier expenditure was being considered at the same time that the RAAF was preparing to purchase upgrades for its F-111Cs and P-3s, as well as replacements for its Mirage III. This brought into direct strategic conflict the role of each service in continental defense. One period author commented that for the cost of a carrier, without its complement of aircraft, an entire squadron of F-18s could be purchased. At the time the RAAF was discussing whether to purchase F-16s or F-18s. The F-18 was a more expensive airframe but was dual-mission-capable and would offer maritime strike capability when equipped with the harpoon missile system that the Australians were

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<sup>52</sup> The term refers to the basic force structure around which a larger ADF would be built once the threat to Australia rose over a period of time.

<sup>53</sup> S.J. Dudzinsky and James Digby, "The Strategic and Tactical Implications of New Weapons Technologies," in Robert O'Neill, ed, *The Defense of Australia: Fundamental New Aspects*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1976), 51-2.

preparing to procure. As time passed, it became increasingly difficult for the Navy to sell the idea that only one carrier, which was clearly all that could be afforded or manned, would be able to protect Australia's coastal waters better than RAAF patrol and strike aircraft.

The RAN, recognizing the growing difficulties associated with its new carrier plan, reverted to the strategy that had saved *Melbourne* during the 1950s. Responding to the cost and threat issues being raised, the Navy decided its new ship to be rotary wing and short/vertical take off and landing (S/VTOL) capable only. Soon after this announcement, the decision was also made to defer the purchase of the fixed wing aircraft until at least 1983, a logical step for budgetary reasons and also because at the time, the only aircraft available for purchase was the British Sea Harrier.

This new plan, of course, would not provide continuity for the fleet air arm in fixed-wing operations. Additionally, the carrier would require significant screening escorts, vessels whose purchase could not be budgeted simultaneously with that of the new carrier. The revolution in inexpensive precision-guided munitions would also render the carrier indefensible, especially with no fixed-wing air defense assets. It was also pointed out by critics that that ASW-capable rotary-wing assets were more economically operated from smaller frigates and destroyers, and that a more appropriate plan might be to invest in SOSUS arrays and additional P-3 maritime patrol aircraft which could cover a wider area, thereby controlling the approaches to Australia at a much reduced cost.

The idea that a carrier task group was needed to protect longer sea lines was also torpedoed. It was felt that in a low or medium intensity contingency, which was the most likely scenario, a regional enemy would not be able to project sufficient power to prevent Australia from rerouting sea traffic until it reached the focal points around its ports. Additionally, flags of convenience were not the norm during the era, so actions would directly impact the maritime nations in which the ships were registered.

Given the substantial jockeying carried out by RAN leadership while attempting to usher along the carrier replacement concept, it is amazing that the idea nearly succeeded. By early 1981, the Australians had decided to either purchase a modified *Iwo Jima* class LPH (now referred to as LHA) or a variant of the *Sea Control Ship* that the US Navy had designed for Spain. A design shop (PMS 308) opened in San Diego shortly thereafter.<sup>54</sup>

In mid-1981, Great Britain determined that *HMS Invincible* would be designated surplus, and it was promptly offered to the Australian government for \$A285 million.<sup>55</sup> Although the *Invincible* class had not made the final cut as a possible replacement for *Melbourne*, it was hard to pass on the offer, despite the fact that the purchase would create numerous logistic, supply and equipment issues, since the rest of the surface force was primarily American-produced or indigenously sourced by that time. After a

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<sup>54</sup> Anthony Wright and Royal Australian Navy, Maritime Studies Program, *Australian Carrier Decisions: The Acquisition of HMA Ships Albatross, Sydney and Melbourne, Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs no. 4*, (Canberra: Maritime Studies Program, Dept. of Defense (Navy), 1998), 167.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-8. Buying the British CV would have saved approximately \$A500 million over the purchase of a new carrier.

quick study, Prime Minister Fraser (Liberal Party) announced that *Invincible* would be purchased and renamed *HMAS Australia*. PMS 308 closed and a transition shop was opened in London.<sup>56</sup> *Melbourne* was quickly decommissioned prior to commencing her final yard period, saving the RAN even more money.

Just when all seemed right for the Royal Australian Navy regarding carrier acquisition, the Falklands War reversed the decision of the British government, which decided to retain *Invincible*. In its place, the British offered *HMS Hermes* on good terms or on lease until a new carrier could be built or commissioned. *Hermes*, however, was almost as weathered as *Melbourne*. Australia's only viable options were to re-commission *Melbourne*, re-commit to the American designs, or do nothing. Within a few weeks of the British decision to rescind their offer, and following more bureaucratic discussion on the subject, the decision was made not to seek a replacement for *Melbourne*.

The decision was not announced until after pending Parliamentary elections, the results of which put the Labor Party back in power. This would seem to indicate that the decision not to purchase a new carrier had, indeed, been made earlier and that the ruling Liberal Party did not wish to upset pro-military voters going into the election. A second factor contributing to the decision was that the Australian economy had just lapsed into a severe recession cycle.<sup>57</sup> Purchasing an expensive piece of military equipment would be particularly unattractive politically,

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<sup>56</sup> Anthony Wright and Royal Australian Navy, Maritime Studies Program, *Australian Carrier Decisions: The Acquisition of HMA Ships Albatross, Sydney and Melbourne, Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs no. 4*, (Canberra: Maritime Studies Program, Dept. of Defense (Navy), 1998), 172.

<sup>57</sup> *NYT*, March 4, 1984, IV, 1:4.

especially given that the cost had skyrocketed immediately after the loss of a bargain basement deal.

An additional economic consideration that the RAN needed to address was its legal obligation to protect the 200 nm Economic Exclusion Zone created by the United Nations Law of the Sea, which entered draft form in 1975. This obligation to protect sea resources, including fisheries and oil platforms, was assuming increased importance to maritime nations and added to the missions of navies, like Australia's, that also performed Coast Guard functions. Since the threat was low in traditional defense missions, operational tasking related to constabulary functions would help allocate additional resources to the RAN and to other service's assets, such as the RAAF's P-3s. During the 1970s, the RAN also took on constabulary missions such as refugee-related operations and customs enforcement in order to meet national requirements and maintain its relevancy. These missions helped lead to the purchase of the *Fremantle* class patrol ships and the opening of new Naval Stations in northern Australia at Cairns and Darwin<sup>58</sup>.

In addition to the movement of patrol boats northward, a concerted effort was made to move some combatant assets to more appropriate locations in Western Australia, creating a two fleet concept.<sup>59</sup> The commissioning of *HMAS Stirling* at Perth in 1978 allowed the RAN to better meet the changing threat environment and to better protect the air-sea gap approaches to the continent. If a threat were

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<sup>58</sup> Royal Australian Navy website <[www.navy.gov.au](http://www.navy.gov.au)> accessed 22 Feb 2007. HMAS Coonawarra opened in 1982 in Darwin, while HMAS Cairns commissioned in 1974.

<sup>59</sup> Royal Australian Navy website <[www.navy.gov.au](http://www.navy.gov.au)> accessed 22 Feb 2007.

to come from the north, deployment time would be shorter and forces would not need to transit the Torres Strait, a natural chokepoint. Protecting the west coast's focal points (shipping approaches) would also be significantly easier since the necessary ships would already be on location.

Deterrence was also a major factor in Australia's defense preparedness. Operational analysis suggested that each service would be able to contribute to the overall defense of the nation and that continuous reassessment would be needed to determine whether the level of deterrence was satisfactory. For the army, this required the mobility to meet enemy attack forces or raiding parties that might cross the air-sea gap to land anywhere on the large, remote continent. For the air force, emphasis was placed on sea strike and land base retaliatory capability including updating the F-111C for land and sea strike with precision guided munitions, the previously mentioned purchase of F-18s, modernization of existing P-3s and the purchase of additional new ones. Following the loss of its carrier, the RAN's deterrence capabilities fell into the hands of its diesel submarines. Taken in total, Australia's forces would have made it extraordinarily difficult for any regional power to project force onto the Australian mainland.

From the viewpoint of the RAN, however, challenges still existed. Diesel submarines are not particularly expensive when compared with the cost and difficulty of defending against them. However, the RAN could only afford, maintain, and man one squadron of aging *Oberons*, which were located in one homeport, limiting their



usefulness on a continent as large as Australia. Although planning for the replacement class of ship began in the early 1980's, the first of the six *Collins* class submarines would not commission until 1996.

The Navy's struggle to obtain a replacement for its aircraft carrier was accompanied by the planned replacement of other surface ships in its line of battle and also of their support ships. The less than glamorous mission of minesweeping received a positive endorsement from the Defense Department and Parliament since it was thought that mines, being inexpensive, easy to use, and inventoried by nearly every nation, would be used against Australia by regional opponents. Canberra endorsed a plan to purchase two indigenously produced experimental mine hunting catamarans in 1981. Their procurement was delayed until 1993, and they were determined to be inadequate after shakedown.<sup>60</sup> Plans were also made for the purchase of two new replenishment ships, while design and cost delays affected the purchase of a replacement fleet supply ship.

The long-term replacement plan for the aging destroyer fleet would prove to be even more difficult to push through. Both the *River* class and the American-built air defense destroyers were approaching the end of their lifespan, and they were also made obsolete by the introduction of modern weaponry by India and many of the ASEAN nations, whose military spending was, on average, double that of Australia in GDP terms.<sup>61</sup> Although Australia perceived its own threat as low, other nations feared by

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<sup>60</sup> David Stevens, *The Royal Australian Navy part of The Australian Centenary History of Defense (Vol III)*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 275.

<sup>61</sup> Australia generally spent 3% of GDP, while India and ASEAN nations averaged 6%.

one or more of their neighbors. Additionally, as less affluent nations became more economically successful, their governments were inclined to build militaries capable of protecting their new wealth and status.

At the same time, the RAN needed to continue its integration with the USN as it increased its own technological advantage with advancements in modern weapons, integrated architectures, and the phasing out of older frameworks such as the Tartar missile system. The American Navy was steadily increasing its expertise in the use of satellite communications and data exchange as the revolution in military affairs continued in both connectivity and precision-guided munitions.

Following the failure to complete the initial planning for a domestically built light destroyer, the Navy launched programs to replace the *River* class and the DDGs. *River* class vessels were purpose built ASW destroyers built in Australia. They were continuously modified to meet USN command and control standards and were equipped with indigenously-produced *Ikara* anti-submarine missiles comparable to America's anti-submarine rocket torpedo (ASROC). The replacement for the *River* class was quickly determined to be the American built *Oliver Hazard Perry* class frigate, which was a significant improvement in capability for the RAN. In the US Navy, this ship design was the low-end escort ship of Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Elmo Zumwalt's "high-low concept".<sup>62</sup> This frigate met the RAN's fiscal constraints and its need to continue to integrate with the USN as part of the ANZUS commitment.

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<sup>62</sup> Elmo R. Zumwalt, *On Watch: A Memoir*, (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co, 1976), 59-84.

Additionally, it was multi-mission capable and able to protect both itself and other assets in its close vicinity. Unfortunately, the RAN was unable to afford the most important part of the ASW integrated weapon suite, the *Light Airborne Multipurpose Sensor Mark III* (LAMPS MKIII) SH-60B helicopters.

Replacing *Brisbane* and her two sister ships was more difficult since no direct modern replacement for the class was available. Despite upgrades made in the United States following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (including SM-1 missiles), the three vessels were nearing the end of their service lives. The next generation air defense ship built by the American navy was the AEGIS multi-mission cruiser, a cutting edge, and consequently very expensive, vessel that would not commission until 1983. Britain's air defense destroyer was the newly developed *Type 42* destroyer, but it was no better equipped to fight an air battle than the American FFG. As in the 1950s, the RAN chose the American ship over the British offering to ease training, logistic, and interoperability concerns. Initial planning called for five hulls. The first three were to be produced in the United States, while the remaining two were contracted to be built by the RAN's Naval Dockyard. After the addition of an additional sixth hull from the United States, there was a financial delay in freeing funding for the production run of the Australian-built FFGs. The first of the six hulls commissioned in 1983. The sixth and final would not commission until 1993.

During this entire period Australia's defense spending remained at a near constant three percent of the gross

national product.<sup>63</sup> Most of the money spent on national defense procurement left the country and therefore did not stimulate the domestic economy. Additionally, what arms Australia did produce did not sell well overseas; the domestic defense industry remained small and completely reliant upon government spending.<sup>64</sup> The result was not Self-Reliance -- never a realistic possibility in any case -- but a continued dependence on its more powerful ally. This was particularly true for the RAN, which relied heavily on high tech, high cost equipment whose purchase took many years produce and pay off.

Despite the tone of Self-Reliance set by the government, Australian society generally felt that increased military spending was not warranted given the absence of an immediate threat and under the watchful eye of the United States in the Cold War.<sup>65</sup> The domestic political agenda placed economic development and social spending above military spending in importance. As one author noted at the time, the only way to increase military allocations was to ensure that GNP increased. That way, three percent had a larger monetary value.<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, with the Australian economy in recession for much of this period, three percent meant even less than the minimum programmed into its five-year defense programs

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<sup>63</sup> Desmond J. Ball, "Equipment Policy for the Defense of Australia," in Robert O'Neill, ed, *The Defense of Australia: Fundamental New Aspects*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1976), 99.

<sup>64</sup> A brief summary of these issues can be read in L. G. Randell, "Australian Defense Industry" and Peter Robinson, "Defense and the Economy" both located in Stevens, David, and Horner, D. M., eds. *Australian Defense Policy for the 1980s*, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 231-243, 275-289.

<sup>65</sup> F. A Mediansky, *The Military and Australia's Defense*, (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1979), 2-22.

<sup>66</sup> David Stevens, "Conclusions" in David Stevens and D. M. Horner, eds, *Australian Defense Policy for the 1980s*, (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982), 295.

(FYDP). Even after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which made it politically and socially expedient to increase defense spending, the government was unable to follow through on long-term budget commitments, shorting each successive year and delaying an accelerated acquisition program for the navy.<sup>67</sup>

As 1983 came to a close the concept of Self-Reliance, buoyed by Canberra's reaction to the Guam Doctrine and the changing local threat environment of the 1970s, remained firmly in place and continued to have a significant effect on the Royal Australian Navy. The RAN looked and operated quite differently than it had envisioned when it created its 1973 wish list of assets. Its only carrier was gone and the service no longer boasted any offensive striking power, a role it had ceded completely to the Royal Australian Air Force. Its new frigates and the rest of its surface assets were the fleet's backbone, participating in nearly every mission the Australian government directed. The fleet was stretched thin defending the Australian continent, maintaining relations with the United States Navy and conducting diplomatic visits throughout the region. Nevertheless, it carried out these missions and its additional constabulary duties with great efficiency as well as maintaining a credible, although expensive, deterrent threat via its diesel submarines, in further support of the nation's needs.

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<sup>67</sup> Gary Brown, and Derek Woolner, *A New Aircraft Carrier for the Royal Australian Navy?*, (Canberra: Strategic and Defense Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1982), 126-8.

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#### IV. A RETURN TO FORWARD DEFENSE

Following the end of the Cold War, Australia made a continuously progressive shift toward greater direct military involvement in its region and around the world. This move was brought about by the dynamically changing world of the 1990s and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, in which Canberra recognized the need to maintain stability in her region, while supporting the international community and her closest ally, the United States. The period is bounded by the two wars in Iraq, to which the RAN selflessly contributed. Sandwiched between the wars are two significant developments -- the liberal ideal of the "new world order" described by President George H.W. Bush, following the 1991 Iraq War (to first be put to the test in the Middle East), and the Washington's recognition of the rise of ideological terrorism to the world stage following the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

It is in this context that we can successfully examine how Australia's defense policy has broadened from merely protecting the Australian continent and its approaches to something much more complex. Australia has adopted an integrated concept of forward defense encompassing local and regional security efforts, reflecting Canberra's desire to assume a greater leadership role in the region. In addition, recognizing the nature of our globalized and interconnected world, Canberra has taken on a much more active role outside Southeast Asia, both alongside its global ally and in support of United Nations missions in the Levant and Africa. Although Canberra's defense policy and its strategic implementation have not formally been

described as "forward defense" by the government of Australia, it is nonetheless an apt depiction. The RAN has benefited from the strategic realignment of this period and is taking steps, as are their sister services, toward ensuring success in meeting the long term political objectives of its government.

One aspect that has shaped Australia's position since the end of the twentieth century has been concern regarding Washington's Asia-Pacific policy, a concern which has led to an increasingly interwoven relationship with the United States. The role of American foreign policy in the future of the region became somewhat ambiguous following the end of the Cold War. Canberra desires Washington's continued influence, seeing the United States as the ultimate guarantor of peace and stability in the region although no single overt threat has presented itself. Despite the absence of a conventional threat to Australian sovereignty, the long-term rise of China and her interaction with Japan and Korea is considered vitally important to its national interest, as is the stability of nations like Indonesia and Pakistan where the Asia-Pacific region flirts with chaos. It is Canberra's continuing belief that the region is safest with Washington taking a keen interest in events there.<sup>68</sup>

The beginning of Australia's transformation away from self-reliance was signaled by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in April 1990. Australia quickly joined the coalition being built by Washington as part of *Desert*

<sup>68</sup> Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Australia's Foreign Policy: Address by the Honourable Alexander Downer, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Joint Service Staff College, Canberra" (26 March 1997) taken from DFAT website  
<[http://www.dfat.gov.au/media/speeches/foreign/1997/aust\\_for\\_pol.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/media/speeches/foreign/1997/aust_for_pol.html)> accessed 7 Feb 2007.



*Shield/Desert Storm*. For this mission, which lasted nearly one year, the RAN maintained a surface task force of two to three combatants, an oiler, Combat Demolition Team 1 and medical units in theater.<sup>69</sup> Canberra's action was not an extension of ANZUS, as had occurred in the Indian Ocean during the 1970s. Instead, as she had done in Korea, Canberra chose to join with the United States to return stability to an area important to world peace. Standing up against tyranny reflected the general understanding that with the demise of the Soviet Union, the democracies of the world could turn toward making the world a better place, which Richard Hill argues is an important rationale for middle powers to build an expeditionary capability into their navies.<sup>70</sup>

Following *Desert Storm*, as part of *Operation Southern Watch*, the RAN maintained its coalition presence in the area to help the United States Fifth Fleet enforce the UN Security Council's long-term sanctions. Between the end of the *Desert Storm* and the build-up for *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, RAN surface assets continued to deploy to the Northern Arabian Gulf, denying the Iraqi regime both critical military and dual use goods, as well as maintaining a seamless blockade which kept illegal oil from leaving the country in return for monetary reimbursement.<sup>71</sup>

Much closer to home, the RAN worked closely with the Australian Army and United Nations forces as Australia

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<sup>69</sup> Australia Department of Navy, Sea Power Centre, *Database of Royal Australian Navy Operations, 1990-2005*, (Sea Power Centre, Canberra: 2005), 6-10 taken from Sea Power Centre website <<http://www.navy.gov.au/spc>> accessed 04 Feb 2007.

<sup>70</sup> Richard Hill and Royal Australian Navy Sea Power Centre, *Medium Power Strategy Revisited*, (Sea Power Centre, Canberra: 2000).

<sup>71</sup> Australia Department of Navy, Sea Power Centre, *Database of Royal Australian Navy Operations, 1990-2005*, 11-43.

assumed the lead role in International Force East Timor (INTERFET), the UN-mandated mission working to restore stability to East Timor, which voted to withdraw from federation with Indonesia in 1999. The situation was volatile, as supporters of independence and those loyal to Jakarta clashed. Given East Timor's proximity to Australia, Canberra had to act. As had happened in the 1950s, Canberra's request that the American military take the leadership role was rejected. Instead, Washington suggested that Australia take responsibility for her own neighborhood. However, the United States did agree to a participatory role which included the dispatch of the cruiser *USS Mobile Bay*.<sup>72</sup> The RAN took great pride in their naval contribution, providing dedicated lift and logistic support and a continuous diplomatic and protective naval presence at Dili throughout the mission. From a transformational standpoint, the Navy also successfully experimented with a high-speed catamaran ferry to move supplies and troops from Northern Australia to Dili. The craft earned the nickname the "Dili Express,"<sup>73</sup> and the concept was quickly adopted by the U.S. Navy and Army, who have tested two catamarans built by AUSTEL Shipyard in Australia and used them to quickly ferry supplies in the Arabian Gulf during the build-up for *Operation Iraqi Freedom*.

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<sup>72</sup> Rod Lyon and William T. Tow, *The Future of the Australian-U.S. Security Relationship*, (US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA, 2003), 6, taken from the SSI website  
<<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=50>>  
accessed 7 Feb 2007.

<sup>73</sup> RAN Navy News, "Last Rights for Dili Express," (11 Jun 2001) taken from RAN website  
<[http://www.defense.gov.au/news/navynews/editions/2001/06\\_11\\_01/story17.htm](http://www.defense.gov.au/news/navynews/editions/2001/06_11_01/story17.htm)>  
accessed 7 Feb 2007.

In 2000, the Department of Defense issued a new White Paper. Although not abandoning self-reliance altogether, the document illustrates the slow evolution away from self-reliance as the only pillar of Australian strategy.

The priority task for the ADF is the defense of Australia. Our approach is shaped by three principles. First, we must be able to defend Australia without relying on the combat forces of other countries - self-reliance. Second, Australia needs to be able to control the air and sea approaches to our continent - a maritime strategy. Third, although Australia's strategic posture is defensive, we would seek to attack hostile forces as far from our shores as possible - proactive operations.<sup>74</sup>

This statement reflects two significant changes in the nature of Australian military strategy. The second principle, defined as being accomplished by a maritime strategy, encompasses the full spectrum of military operations. The humanitarian and stabilization missions which Australia had been successfully executing for decades were to continue, but also included was the following:

In the highly unlikely event of unprovoked armed aggression against any of our immediate neighbours, Australia would want to be in a position, if asked, to help our neighbours defend themselves.<sup>75</sup>

The final principle of Australian strategy - proactive operations - is important because it stated the significant fact that, in the future, Australia would be an active partner in "coalitions of forces to meet crises beyond our

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<sup>74</sup> Australia Department of Defense, *Defense 2000: Our Future Defense Force* (DOD, Canberra, 2000), XI, taken from the Australian DOD website <<http://www.defense.gov.au/whitepaper/>> accessed 7 Feb 2007.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, XI.

immediate neighbourhood."<sup>76</sup> In time to come, Australia can increasingly be expected to support missions outside of their immediate area which are not in response to a direct threat to Canberra's security.

The above views corresponded to a significant shift in the purpose and missions of the Navy, as well as in the types of platforms needed to accomplish them. The White Paper gave increased priority to both the service assets and the vision of long-term joint maritime strategy. Due consideration was also given to the increasing asymmetry and inter-connectedness of the battlespace brought about by the information revolution in military affairs. The Air Force was to seek a single replacement F-111 and F/A-18, and upgrades or replacement for the P-3 patrol aircraft would also be sought. Naval projects highlighted in the manuscript included:

- Upgrading the FFG class with SM-2 missiles
- Increasing combat capability of the ANZAC frigates
- A new class of long-range air defense ships
- Replacement replenishment ships
- Upgrades to the Seasprite and Seahawk helicopter fleet
- Acoustic and combat systems upgrades to the *Collins* class submarines
- Development of a new heavyweight (submarine launched) torpedo

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<sup>76</sup> Australia Department of Defense, *Defense 2000: Our Future Defense Force* (DOD, Canberra, 2000), 51, taken from the Australian DOD website <<http://www.defense.gov.au/whitepaper/>> accessed 7 Feb 2007.

- A replacement for the *Fremantle* class patrol boats<sup>77</sup>

In general, the upgrades to the service fleet show that the government and Defense planned to increase the role of the RAN in future expeditionary missions involving Australian assets, and in further involvement in coalition operations, especially with the United States.

The FFG improvements were intended to give the RAN a limited air defense role while it developed replacements for the *Brisbane* class, whose last hull would decommission in 2001. By 2000 the SM-1 missile was obsolete compared to anti-ship missiles produced and exported by the major weapons-producing countries (Russia, France, Israel, Italy, the United States, and even China). Even with the newest version of the SM-2 missile, the combat suite of the FFGs was capable of engaging only two targets at a time, using an older generation of equipment not designed to optimize the reaction time needed in a modern missile attack detect-to-engage sequence.

The upgrades to the ANZAC class were a mix of primary mission and self-defense upgrades. Notable inclusions were the Harpoon anti-ship missile, the evolved Sea-Sparrow missile (ESSM) which fit into a compact vertical launch cell, and radar upgrades to support ESSM.

In 2003, the new torpedo selected was the latest generation MK48 Mod 7 ADCAP (advanced capability) torpedo, a variant of the type already in use by both the Australian and American navies.<sup>78</sup> In keeping with the desire to

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<sup>77</sup> Australia Department of Defense, *Defense 2000: Our Future Defense Force* (DOD, Canberra, 2000), 84-94, taken from the Australian DOD website <<http://www.defense.gov.au/whitepaper/>> accessed 7 Feb 2007.

<sup>78</sup> Defense Daily International, U.S., "Australian Navies Sign MoU To Cooperate on Mk 48 CBASS Upgrade," Apr 4, 2003. Vol. 4, Iss. 14, 1.

procure its most complex weapons systems from the United States, Canberra announced in 2006 that the three planned long-range air defense ships would be built in Australia and would include the AEGIS weapons system.<sup>79</sup> This will give the RAN future capability to add Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (TBMD), which the USN is currently developing, and also allows for the possible addition of the Tomahawk weapon system, which would give the Australian Navy a strike capability that it has not had since the A-4 left its inventory.

Following 9/11, the planned installation of the NULKA passive anti-ship missile decoy system on all ships was accelerated. NULKA, which is Australian designed and produced, is also being outfitted on American warships.<sup>80</sup>

Taken in total, the three principles and the capabilities discussed in the 2000 Defense White Paper were precisely what American policymakers have wished Australia's alliance relationship to be since ANZUS was first signed. The US-Australia alliance was, at that point, ready to face 9/11; and the RAN was prepared to do its part.

A mere three days after the attack on the United States, the Prime Minister of Australia aligned strongly with the United States in the emerging war on terrorism, invoking Article IV of the ANZUS treaty for the first time in the Alliance's 50 year history. In a press conference,

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<sup>79</sup> *Asia-Pacific Defense Reporter*, September 2005, 6-8.

<sup>80</sup> Antony Preston, "Australian Naval Budget Receives Major Funding Boost," in *Sea Power*, (Washington: Aug 2002.Vol. 45, Iss. 8), 35.

and with much pride, Prime Minister Howard, who was in Washington when the attacks occurred,<sup>81</sup> declared:

The Australian people have been shocked and outraged at the enormity of the terrorist attacks on the United States. These heinous crimes have caused catastrophic loss of life, injury and destruction. We anticipate that a significant number of Australian nationals are included among those who lost their lives.

I have already conveyed to the President of the United States the condolences of the Australian Government and people, and expressed our resolute support for the United States at this most difficult time.

The terrorist attacks on the United States were discussed today at a special Cabinet meeting that I convened on my return from the United States.

The Government has decided, in consultation with the United States, that Article IV of the ANZUS Treaty applies to the terrorist attacks on the United States. The decision is based on our belief that the attacks have been initiated and coordinated from outside the United States.

This action has been taken to underline the gravity of the situation and to demonstrate our steadfast commitment to work with the United States in combating international terrorism.

The Australian Government will be in close consultation with the United States Administration in the period ahead to consider what actions Australia might take in support of the US response to these attacks.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Australia Office of the Prime Minister, "Transcript of the Prime Minister, the Honourable John Howard MP, Press Conference, Australian Embassy, Washington DC" (11 Sep 2001), taken from the Australian Prime Minister's website <<http://www.pm.gov.au/News/interviews/2001/interview1236.htm>> accessed 7 Feb 2007.

<sup>82</sup> AustralianPolitics.com, "Howard Government Invokes ANZUS Treaty," 14 Sep 2001, taken from AustralianPolitics.com website. <<http://australianpolitics.com/news/2001/01-09-14c.shtml>> accessed 7 Feb 2007.

Quoted in its entirety, this is the most significant statement in the history of the Alliance in that its interpretation of Article IV of the ANZUS treaty was that the "Pacific Area" was no longer geographically constrained.

The RAN immediately became involved in *Operation Enduring Freedom* by continuing to dispatch ships which now patrolled not only the Arabian Gulf, but also the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean, conducting maritime interdiction operations to contain terrorist movements and operations. To ease the burden on the U.S. Navy throughout the region, the RAN created seagoing staffs that would routinely take Task Group command of the sea-based sanctions efforts beginning in 2001.<sup>83</sup>

Australia and her navy have also contributed substantially to the subsequent and ongoing operations in Iraq. During the initial stages of the war, the Australians had three ships in the order of battle (*Kanimbla*, *Anzac* and *Darwin*) with Captain P. D. Jones and his task group staff having responsibility for the multinational naval force that would secure the Khawr Abd Allah waterway as far north as Umm Qasr, nearly fifty miles inland. The RAN also had deployed Combat Demolition Team 3.<sup>84</sup>

To this day, as America's unflagging ally, the RAN maintains a continuous presence and acts as mission enabler in the Arabian Gulf by rotating both ships and staffs through theater. They have been vital to ensuring that the maritime environment of Iraqi waters is secure and safe by

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<sup>83</sup> Greg Nash and Neil Stevens, *Australia's Navy in the Gulf: From Countenance to Catalyst, 1941-2006*, (Topmill, Silverwater, NSW: 2006), 50-90.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-71.



providing oversight and protection for the safe movement of oil from the two sea terminals; suppressing the movements of Al Qaeda, insurgents and illicit goods; and helping to ensure that the fledgling Iraqi Navy is equipped and trained correctly.

During this period, the Defense Department also invested in the creation of deployable joint staff headquarters capable of conducting integrated Australian operations. The command modules will be both land and sea-based, with the sea-based modules located onboard *HMAS Kanimbla* and *Manoora*.<sup>85</sup>

In 2000, the Navy also established the Sea Power Center to "undertake activities which promote the study, discussion and awareness of maritime issues and strategy within the RAN and the defense and civil communities at large."<sup>86</sup> The Center produces outstanding literature which serves the needs of the military well, especially in its articulation of service needs to what is commonly viewed by Australian maritime writers as a maritime nation with no sense of itself.

The Navy's stature in the budgeting process would seem to be further enhanced by the Defense White Paper Updates issued in 2003 and 2005. These papers both state that for the foreseeable future Australia will continue to fight alongside the United States against international terrorism, both near and far.<sup>87</sup> Although all three services have benefited from the short-term financial windfall

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<sup>85</sup> Australia Department of Defense, *Defense Capabilities Plan 2006-2016*, 99-100, taken from Australian DOD website  
<[http://www.defense.gov.au/dmo/id/dcp/DCP\\_2006\\_16.pdf](http://www.defense.gov.au/dmo/id/dcp/DCP_2006_16.pdf)> accessed 23 Feb 2007.

<sup>86</sup> Australia Department of Navy Sea Power Centre website  
<<http://www.navy.gov.au/spc/>> accessed 7 Feb 2007.

<sup>87</sup> Both papers are available at Australian DOD website  
<<http://www.defense.gov.au/update2005/index.cfm>> accessed on 20 Mar 2007.

associated with acquiring equipment to fight the GWOT, the Navy's success in obtaining approval to replace their aging amphibious lift platforms is particularly noteworthy.<sup>88</sup> New equipment includes three amphibious dock ships and LCMS. Of special significance for the Navy is that in the budget process, these vessels are listed as joint procurement assets rather than being procured under a navy line item. This may provide insulation against the kind of budget reductions that occurred in the early 1980s.

The Australian long acquisition strategy is customarily released as a *Defense Capability Plan* (DCP). It is a simple document that notifies both Parliament and Australian industry what, when and how the government plans to procure defense equipment. The 2006 DCP is heavily maritime-based, with the Navy providing a lot of the flexibility required to bring the other services into the fight (principle two), as well as conducting integrated coalition operations (principle three). As occurred a generation ago, the Air Force and Navy both need advanced and therefore expensive equipment simultaneously. These two services dominate the proposed budget over the next decade. The most expensive and long-lead projects are:

- RAAF 100 Joint Strike Fighters (A\$11.5-\$15.5 billion)
- RAN AEGIS Air Warfare Destroyers (A\$4.5-6 billion)
- RAAF P-3 replacement or update (A\$3.5-4.5 billion)

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<sup>88</sup> Grant Holloway, "Big Boost for Australia's Defense Budget," (CNN.com, 09 May 2002) taken from CNN website  
<<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/auspac/05/09/aust.defense/index.html>> accessed 7 Feb 2007.

- RAN replacement of Navy SUW/USW helicopters (A\$2.5-3.5 billion)
- RAA Overlander family of vehicles (A\$2-2.5 billion)
- RAN amphibious ships (A\$1.5-2 billion)
- RAAF multi-mission UAV (A\$1-1.5 billion)<sup>89</sup>

Overall, the defense budget increase since 9/11 has been necessitated by the operational commitments of Australia's military and the procurement plan required to meet the principles identified in the government's military strategy. However, the DCP may not play out as designed.

Will the plan survive its first contact with reality unscathed? For proponents of expeditionary naval power, the land-based Joint Strike Fighter is the elephant in the room, whose effect remains to be seen. Since the current Navy plan is not nearly as audacious as the one proposed following the end of the Vietnam War, it may be less likely to become bogged down by either inter- or intra-service competition. However, despite the budgeting process being a truly joint exercise that minimizes inter-service competition, the plan may suffer from the same flaw which has ultimately hampered all previous Navy efforts to modernize - Australia's year-to-year defense budget allocation.

First and foremost, operational deployments are expensive materially and also arduous for service members. Given the number of commitments and the small size of the

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<sup>89</sup> Australia Department of Defense, *Defense Capabilities Plan 2006-2016*, 141, taken from Australian DOD website  
[http://www.defense.gov.au/dmo/id/dcp/DCP\\_2006\\_16.pdf](http://www.defense.gov.au/dmo/id/dcp/DCP_2006_16.pdf) accessed 23 Feb 2007.

Australian military, it is likely that reconstitution of these resources, machine and human alike, will cost more than predicted, leading to a strain on the acquisition budget.

More importantly, the current budget is similar in form to the one proposed following the reheating of the Cold War in Asia in the late 1970s. This somewhat pie-in-the-sky proposal depicts all service acquisition budgets increasing *nearly simultaneously*,<sup>90</sup> leading to a total budget which will most likely grow each year for much of the next decade if Canberra stays in the GWOT. The numbers seem impractical, if not downright implausible, given previous history. It is unlikely that Australia's economy will grow sufficiently for the same percentage of GDP to cover burgeoning defense costs. Also, the defense budget will undoubtedly reflect the ebb and flow of the politics of anti-terrorism which will most likely mimic domestic political trends in the United States, as happened during the Vietnam era. Displeasure is growing in both nations over the war in Iraq and the continued lack of stability in Afghanistan.<sup>91</sup> Admittedly, this discomfiture is more dramatic in the United States; but if opposition in the lead nation continues to grow, its allies could jump off the bandwagon as quickly as they jumped on it. The 2007 Ministerial election in Australia and, more importantly, the 2008 Presidential election in the United States will likely define the future of both countries' involvement in

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<sup>90</sup> Australia Department of Defense, *Defense Capabilities Plan 2006-2016*, 5-8, 145-148, taken from Australian DOD website <[http://www.defense.gov.au/dmo/id/dcp/DCP\\_2006\\_16.pdf](http://www.defense.gov.au/dmo/id/dcp/DCP_2006_16.pdf)> accessed 23 Feb 2007.

<sup>91</sup> *Asian Free Press*, "Australian PM Defends Iraq War Despite Election Threat," 23 Jan 2007, taken from CIA Open Source Center <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)> accessed 24 Jan 2007.

the Global War on Terrorism, particularly as regards regime change and the democratization of other nations.

The preeminent influence on any defense budget is the state of the current economy, which in Australia has been relatively strong, stable and resilient since the early 1990s. The government has been running minor surpluses, and foreign debt is completely in the private sector. It is unknown how long government fiscal policy can fend off a recession, but the government is working hard to expand trade agreements to keep its foreign markets growing. Of greater concern is the projected growth of social and healthcare costs as the labor force shrinks and the population ages. Social spending will likely put significant restraints on other areas of spending, such as defense.<sup>92</sup>

The future course of the RAN is necessarily uncertain; but it is likely that the service will not acquire every capability for which it is currently slated, despite its vital role in the joint vision of the Australian way of war. Canberra's defense acquisition process may present a no-win situation: If Australia's military operations continue at the present pace, it is difficult to believe there will be enough money to pay for the planned new technology. If, however, Australia takes a step back from its current commitments overseas, the impetus to invest in additional defense capability may wane.

Today the RAN has re-emerged, following the rather distant and bleak days of self-reliance, as a key player in Australia's new strategy - a truly maritime one - which has

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<sup>92</sup> David Gruen and Amanda Sayegh, "The Evolution of Fiscal Policy in Australia," in *The Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, vol. 21, no. 4, 618-634.

embraced once more the concept of forward defense. If the three principles described in the 2000 Defense White Paper survive the coming political process, and if most of the acquisition plan remains in place, the Royal Australian Navy will have built the most balanced and capable fleet in its history.

## **V. THE RISE OF SOFT POWER AND THE REGION'S NEXT HEGEMON: THE LAST DECADE**

Australia's foreign policy toward China over the last ten years is one which demonstrates the use of bilateral and selected recent multilateral efforts to achieve success. In many ways Canberra is an ideal economic partner for Beijing. The government of Australia currently sees itself as a medium power that desires to deal with other governments and supra-national bodies as independently as possible. The primary focus of Canberra's foreign policy has been to ensure regional stability. They are allied with the United States, which worries Beijing; but this is currently offset by the significant number of political and economic ties shared by Canberra and Beijing. The relationship between China and Australia is likely to continue to grow for the foreseeable future despite Australia's traditional alliance with the United States.

Before pressing into the nature of the Canberra-Beijing relationship, a brief discussion of how Australia moved to the point of mutual cooperation with China is in order.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, two significant strategic events forced Australia to adopt a new foreign policy. The first event was Britain's pragmatic 1967 decision to withdraw its forward-deployed military forces in Asia. The Australians had been concerned about this eventuality for some time and events like the United States forcing an end to British-French intervention in Egypt during the 1954 Suez Crisis highlighted this concern. Britain's Asia pullout was completed in 1969. The second event was the issuance of the Guam (or Nixon) Doctrine,

also in 1969, which raised questions about the resolve of the United States to continue to its involvement in stabilizing the Asia-Pacific region.

These events stimulated the opening of a dialogue toward a more cordial relationship with Beijing which resulted in the establishment of diplomatic relations in December 1972, just over six years before Washington established formal relations with Beijing. Since that time, Australia's foreign policy has steered a course between safeguarding its own vital interests and maintaining alliance with the United States, both during the bipolar world period between 1970 and 1991 and also in the post-Cold-War era, when the U.S. became the sole superpower.

Since the early 1970s Australia and China have enjoyed increasing economic coordination, which has greatly expanded since China's began its steady market reforms in 1978. This increased trade was also brought about not just by the previously noted Guam Doctrine, but also by London's failed attempt to join the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1961 and its eventual integration into the European Union (EU) in 1973.<sup>93</sup> The United States was fully supportive of the EEC and EU since they were seen as continuing to strengthen Europe against Soviet aggression. Australia, however, was very concerned about the possible negative impact of European economic unity on the traditional commonwealth trading block.<sup>94</sup>

Canberra has promoted strengthening economic and, more recently, other relations with Beijing. Australia has

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<sup>93</sup> European Union website <<http://europa.eu.int/>> accessed 12 Dec 2005.

<sup>94</sup> *Current Notes in International Affairs*, vol. 33, 1962, 51-53, cited in Glen St. James Barclay and, Joseph M. Siracusa, *Australian-American Relations Since 1945*, (Holt, Reinhardt and Winston, NSW, 1976), p.63-4.



often successfully dealt bilaterally with China on trade issues, and economic relationships have blossomed at both the national and regional government levels in both nations. These efforts have promoted Australia to China's eighth largest trading partner overall, and China's "third largest merchandise trading partner, export market and source of imports, with two-way trade in 2003 worth more than A\$23 billion (US\$16 billion)." <sup>95</sup>

Trade between the two nations is growing rapidly and is noted with satisfaction by each country's executives and their spokesmen at press conferences. On April 19, 2005, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman noted:

In recent years, the momentum of development in relations between China and Australia has been very good. Trade between the two countries exceeded \$20 billion last year, up 50 percent from the year before. The rate of increase is quite significant. Establishing a free trade area is the common desire of both sides. Both sides believe that establishing a free trade area is an equal, mutually beneficial, and reciprocal economic and trade arrangement, which will better promote economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. <sup>96</sup>

Discussions are currently underway for the creation of a free trade agreement (FTA) between the two nations. The establishment of such an agreement is important to both governments, as it would ensure continued economic stability and growth. Australia views an FTA as helping to stabilize modern China. Beijing understands that an FTA

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<sup>95</sup> *Beijing China Daily* (Internet Version-WWW) in English 17 Aug 04[Unattributable article from the "Home News" page: "Australian PM Praises Deng's Reform"] taken from Opensource Center website [www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov), accessed 30 Nov 2005.

<sup>96</sup> "PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Ministry Spokesman Qin Gang Answers Reporters Questions at Regular News Conference on 19 April 2005," Translated by CIA Opensource Center from MFA website taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 7 Feb 2007.

would be a significant milestone for its economic policy -- the first entered into by China. Beijing also views Australia as an important country in the region and the only Western nation whose foreign policy is sufficiently independent to work bilaterally this type of issue.<sup>97</sup>

China's desire to integrate fully into the Western economy, coupled with Australia's desire for continued regional stability and economic prosperity, prompted Canberra to back Beijing's bid to enter the World Trade Organization. The two governments worked bilaterally in 1999 to reach agreement on the principles which would allow Australia to support China's entry, which came in 2001.

The trade occurring between the Australia and China is quite complimentary; both governments are willing to set aside differences to work toward a common vision of prosperity. Australia's leading imports from China include finished textiles, electronics and machinery, chemicals, and consumer products; China receives wheat, iron ore, oil, natural resources and nonferrous metals. The trend is expected to continue. China's media has noted that Beijing has increased its wheat imports from Australia (1 million tons in 2004).<sup>98</sup> China will, no doubt, continue to purchase increasing amounts of wheat as it is unable to provide sufficient amounts for domestic consumption. As an example of Beijing's willingness to embrace the free market, in 2005 the Chinese steel industry was stung by a 71.5 percent rise in the cost of iron ore from Australian and Brazilian producers. The Chinese government did not become involved,

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<sup>97</sup> There is too much political friction between the United States and China. Western Europe is tied to unification and expansion under the umbrella of the EU. Canada does most of its economic dealings with the United States.

<sup>98</sup> *Beijing China Daily* (Business Weekly Supplement) (Internet Version-WWW) in English 0155 GMT 24 May 04 taken from Opensource Center website <www.opensource.gov>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

preferring to let market forces settle the issue, a significant milestone in Chinese *laissez-faire* economics.<sup>99</sup>

Politically, both countries desire regional stability and seek appropriate multilateral frameworks and organizations to meet this end. Both have integrated into the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization - an organization whose economic goals can sometimes transcend traditional political boundaries. Additionally, Beijing and Canberra are both dialogue members of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), where both hope to influence the countries of Southeast Asia. However, since ASEAN guides this multi-lateral forum to its own end, the common understanding between Beijing and Canberra could be, and has been, under stress.

During 2005, the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and has been the source of tension between Beijing and Canberra. Australia at first intended not to sign the pact, which China has already signed. Prime Minister Howard cited self-defense as the primary reason. This is much in line with President Bush's concept of pre-emptive war, which Australia supported by virtue of its participation in the 2003 war in Iraq. In July 2005, Australia agreed to sign the pact using the rationale that ASEAN would offer Australia a seat at the December East Asia Summit. However, Mr. Howard stated that pre-emptive strike remains an option for the national military strategy against terrorists operating in other countries which pose an immediate threat to Australia. This has drawn

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<sup>99</sup> Liaoning Ribao (Internet Version-WWW) on 19 June 05 taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

significant recent criticism from Beijing, who unequivocally stated that Canberra is upholding an immoral doctrine.<sup>100</sup>

The Australian Air Force maintains a squadron of F-111 bombers with precision-guided munitions. They are the only medium strike aircraft owned by an Asia-Pacific nation and pose a legitimate strike threat to other countries in the region. The same could be argued for the limited power projection capability maintained by the Australian Army and Navy. Their capabilities, though small by United States standards, are significant compared to those of most other regional countries (China, Japan, and India being the exceptions).

Both Australia and China also use United Nations to influence regional stability, and both have been active in stabilization efforts in East Timor. Australia took the lead role in this UN mission following the United States refusal to become involved militarily. China is also provided 69 police officers as peacekeepers to the mission.<sup>101</sup> Sending peacekeepers on UN missions is not historically common for China since traditionally these operations were viewed as interference in other countries internal problems.<sup>102</sup> Peacekeeping operations in East Timor may signal a change in Beijing's previous policy of non-involvement in regional stability matters, a change which

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<sup>100</sup> *Hong Kong South China Morning Post* (Internet Version-WWW) in English 28 Jul 05, "Strike-First policy Irresponsible," taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

<sup>101</sup> United Nations Depart. of Peacekeeping Operations website <[www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/2002/May2002\\_3.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/2002/May2002_3.pdf)> accessed on 8 Dec 2005.

<sup>102</sup> *Hong Kong South China Morning Post* (Internet Version-WWW) in English 21 Aug 02 13, "Welcome Peace Drive" taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

would be welcomed by Canberra as a sign of China's growing recognition of its own regional responsibility and maturity in foreign affairs.

Australia and China have also been constructive and appreciative of each other in their attempts to bring stability to the Korean peninsula in light of North Korea's continuing threat of nuclear blackmail. As part of its effort to establish regional stability, Australia established diplomatic relations with the DPRK in 2000 after a 25 year hiatus.<sup>103</sup> In January 2003, Australian diplomats traveled to Pyongyang in an attempt to negotiate an end to the stalemate regarding Kim Jong Il's demand for bilateral negotiations with the United States. The effort was welcomed by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs as constructive diplomacy in a serious matter.<sup>104</sup> Likewise, Prime Minister Howard has voiced praise for China's involvement in the three- and six-party talks.<sup>105</sup>

In contrast to President Bush's growing military and moral support of the regime in Taipei, a concern to Beijing, Australia has been unwavering in its support of a "one China" policy since establishing diplomatic relations with the PRC. As an example, Canberra warned Papua New Guinea of "the negative political and social implications after the latter established 'diplomatic relations' with

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<sup>103</sup> Australian Government Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade website <[www.dfat.gov.au/geo/dprk/dprk\\_brief.html#\\_Chronology\\_of\\_Key\\_Developments%20in%20A](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/dprk/dprk_brief.html#_Chronology_of_Key_Developments%20in%20A)> accessed on 5 Dec 2005.

<sup>104</sup> *Beijing Xinhua* Domestic Service in Chinese 22 Aug 03 taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

<sup>105</sup> Meng Yan and Shao Zongwei, "Leaders Meet Howard," in *Beijing China Daily* (Internet Version-WWW) in English 0030 GMT 19 Aug 03, China Daily Staff from the "Top News" page: taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

Taiwan" in 1999.<sup>106</sup> An April 2005 an Australian poll by the Lowy Institute indicated that Australians desire not to choose sides should a cross-strait war break out with the United States supporting the Republic of China.<sup>107</sup> Last year's passing of Beijing's anti-secession law, which formalized Beijing's options (including military) should Taiwan declare its independence, was only lightly criticized in Canberra, but the commentary focused on the continued peaceful resolution of the cross-strait crisis.<sup>108</sup>

Australia, like much of the developed world, has strong economic ties with Taiwan, although not diplomatic relations. Taiwan is Australia's eighth largest trading partner, with trade similar to that with the PRC in terms of types of goods imported and exported between the two nations, but at about a quarter of the monetary value of the trade relationship that currently exists between the PRC and Australia.<sup>109</sup> In short, peaceful resolution would allow continued political and economic stability for both Canberra and Beijing. Canberra would most likely neither commit to nor support military action should Washington determine intervention to be necessary, despite the arrangements of the ANZUS treaty. This has been Canberra's

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<sup>106</sup> Shao Zongwei, *Beijing China Daily* (Internet Version) in English 13 Jul 99, taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

<sup>107</sup> Nick Squires, "New Mates," in *Hong Kong South China Morning Post* in English 16 Apr 05 p A18, taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

<sup>108</sup> China -- FMN in English 17 Mar 05 taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

<sup>109</sup> Taiwan.com.au portal website <[www.taiwan.com.au](http://www.taiwan.com.au)>, 2003-2004 figures accessed 12 Dec 2005.

unwritten policy since the first Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1954, and would most certainly be true if the United States were seen as the aggressor.<sup>110</sup>

Beijing has also used non-traditional diplomatic measures to ensure continued successful relations with Australia and to balance regional power against the United States and other competing interests. Chinese officials have noted the success of people-to-people exchanges in news briefings. These include city-to-city cultural exchanges, Model United Nations delegations, and collegiate student exchanges. After the outbreak of SARS in China, Chinese media noted, with approval, that Canberra planned no interruption in educational services out of fear of contagion.<sup>111</sup> During 2003, Chinese student applications actually increased and could be attributable in part to the policy taken in regards to the SAR outbreak and the flexibility of Australia's educational system.<sup>112</sup> It might, therefore, be expected that Australia will be less emotional than other countries about a possible pandemic of avian bird flu, and will likely be among the first to offer assistance to China to maintain control.

In the area of socio-economic growth, Beijing has viewed Canberra's model socialist healthcare network in an open and engaged way. Beijing sent a government working group to Australia in January 2003 to study Australia's

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<sup>110</sup> Jacob Bercovich, *The Evolution of ANZUS in ANZUS in Crisis: Alliance Management in International Affairs*, (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1988), 34-5.

<sup>111</sup> *Beijing China Daily* (Internet Version-WWW) in English 1630 GMT 07 May 03 taken from Opensource Center website [www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov), accessed 30 Nov 2005.

<sup>112</sup> Kym Charleton, "Letter to Australia Government Department Immigration and Multicultural Affairs," [www.immi.gov.au/letters/letters03/finreview\\_0708.htm](http://www.immi.gov.au/letters/letters03/finreview_0708.htm) accessed on 12 Dec 2005.

successful retirement and social welfare system.<sup>113</sup> This effort, like the others, reflects the continued deep bilateral relations between the two nations, as well as an indication of the commitment of Chinese officials as they consider how the needs of their large, aging population over the next century.

In defense matters, Canberra has worked bilaterally with Beijing on military-to-military relations, with a number of high level exchanges occurring during the last decade including the aforementioned coordination efforts in East Timor. Ongoing exchanges have also occurred and continue to occur at lower levels in the chains of command; Beijing desires to continue and increase the frequency and reach of bilateral military relations. Currently, China's and Australia's spheres of influence overlap in the South China Sea. Military relations will become increasingly important as both countries modernize and expand the scope of their operations in the region. Chinese maritime strategy already reflects a desire to project military power to the first island chain and eventually the second. Australia's Parliament has been considering shifting to a more assertive and active maritime strategy and a more aggressive procurement schedule, which is reflective of the enhanced role it has taken in regional and world affairs since 9/11. Australia has been focusing on changing the traditional doctrine of its military defense. This change would include an expanded and more independent role in the Asia-Pacific region and further integration and support for vital interests outside the region, accomplished by

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<sup>113</sup> Zi Mi, "Oz Shares Social Security Experience," in *Beijing China Daily* (Internet Version-WWW) in English 0409 GMT 25 Jan 03, from the "Home News" page, taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.



expanding the already close alliance with the United States in the Global War on Terrorism.<sup>114</sup> Beijing looks with disfavor on Canberra maintaining too close an alliance with the United States, both within and outside the region.

The relationship between Canberra and Washington recently strengthened since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism, which vexes Beijing. Even before 9/11, Beijing's rhetoric warned of the creation of an "Asian NATO" anchored by Japan in the north and Australia in the south and containing South Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan.<sup>115</sup> Beijing's complaints regarding United States containment foster China's image as a repressed underdog. Beijing combats perceived U.S. encroachment through bilateral relations with other nations in an attempt to balance this supposed challenge to its sovereignty. In its relations with Australia, Beijing depends upon both Canberra's reasonableness and Australia's desire to control its own destiny within the region. Beijing does not condemn the ANZUS treaty provided it remains a purely bilateral agreement.<sup>116</sup> With this in mind, China hopes to move Australia into a position to balance or limit United States influence in the area.

Beijing has also dealt bilaterally with Canberra on human rights issues. Canberra, like other Western countries, has questioned the treatment of Chinese people by their government, particularly following the Tiananmen

<sup>114</sup> Alex Tewes, Laura Rayner, Kelly Kavanaugh, *Australia's Maritime Strategy in the 21st Century*, Parliamentary Research Brief no. 4, 2004-05, Australian Government, Parliament of Australia Library.

<sup>115</sup> Willy Wo-Lap Lam, *Hong Kong South China Morning Post* (Internet Version- WWW) in English 26 Apr 00, taken from Opensource Center website <www.opensource.gov>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

<sup>116</sup> Beijing Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China WWW-Text in English 08 Mar 05, "Foreign Ministry Spokesman's Press Conference on 8 Mar 2005", Liu Jianchao speaking taken from Opensource Center website <www.opensource.gov>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

Square massacre. However, since 1998 the two governments have held annual talks on human rights sponsored by the Australian government's Human Rights and Technical Co-Operation Program with China (HRTC), which allows sensitive dialogue to occur between the governments without upsetting the overall relationship.<sup>117</sup> Australia can appear to help China become more Western in regard to human rights, while China allows minimal official criticism and intrusion into an internal issue.

The two governments also share a common concern over the plight of ethnic groups (including Chinese) living in other countries. Neither government desires the economic and political fallout of a refugee situation resulting from the repression of ethnic minorities in Southeast Asian nations. East Timor is an example of how both governments will likely work together in the future to prevent such occurrences.

The overarching trend in this relationship is one in which both Canberra and Beijing solidified a relationship mutually beneficial to each other. Only recently have Australian Parliamentarians questioned started to question how much soft power the Chinese have accrued in the region.<sup>118</sup> But, Australia's economic future is in Asia and, as in previous decades that future cannot afford to be interrupted by an arms buildup meant to deter an expanding Chinese Navy. Given Washington's longstanding political-military stance in Southeast Asia and Canberra's lack of resources and inability to stand up to its vastly more

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<sup>117</sup> "Model Forum Promotes Human Rights" in *Hong Kong South China Morning Post* in English 01 Apr 97 p 6, (Internet Version-WWW) in English 11 Nov 04, unattributed article from the "Opinion" page, taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 30 Nov 2005.

<sup>118</sup> "Asia Pacific" program on *Radio Australia* 07 Nov 06 taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 07 Feb 2007.

powerful Chinese neighbor, Canberra has little choice but to continue to wield soft power as well as she can and rely on the remaining superpower to achieve militarily what she cannot. If Washington were to pull back from the region in the future, necessity would dictate an even closer alignment between Canberra and Beijing.

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## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The roots and evolution of the RAN have been guided largely by two strategic goals: to protect the homeland and to integrate with the United States Navy; and also by constraints imposed by a variety of domestic factors. Historically, this set of circumstances has resulted in the creation and re-creation of a competent and increasingly modern RAN. Innovation has been somewhat limited in scope, however, falling short of the aspirations of Navy leadership.

Australia's high-end naval forces have consistently moved toward integrating and operating with the United States Navy. At the same time, however, the RAN must maintain its ability to protect the homeland against a variety of regional threats, a need that the United States cannot be relied upon to satisfy.

These competing considerations, as well as others more secondary in nature, have guided the direction of the RAN for the past 60 years, a direction not likely to change significantly in the foreseeable future unless the United States loses, or abandons, its currently preponderant role in the Asia-Pacific region. The RAN will continue its modernization, and its mission effectiveness can be expected to increase because of continued technological progress.

U.S. policymakers and maritime strategists recognize the importance of our relationship with the Government of Australia. The 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review noted that Australia is one of our two most important allies in the

Global War on Terrorism. Since 9/11, the relationship between these ANZUS allies has dramatically improved, a significant fact given that the United States Navy plays a major role in executing Washington's security strategy in the Pacific theater and that the RAN is a vital ally in securing our mutual interests in Southeast Asia. Evidence of the strength of the relationship was provided when the Australian Parliament declared 9/11 to be an attack on the ANZUS alliance. Since that time, the RAN has been active in its support of U.S. strategy in the Middle East, both as a force provider and as a task group commander.

Since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism, the Australian Defense Force (including the Navy) has accelerated its acquisition programs to support deployments and has begun considering changes both in force structure and in policies. For example, the recent assertion by Prime Minister Howard that Australia is responsible for policing an "arc of instability" which extends from East Timor into the Pacific Islands may have significant impact on future missions for the RAN,<sup>119</sup> although one must remember that this policy has been articulated many times since the creation of ANZUS.

Understanding the dynamics of the RAN's history can help the United States Navy and the its government formulate a maritime policy that not only serves the national interests of the United States but is also inclusive of the needs and capabilities of the Royal Australian Navy. It would, in particular, be a mistake to assume that the Australian Navy has embarked on a new path since 9/11, or that its current direction is not subject to

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<sup>119</sup> Sydney ABC Radio National WWW-Audio in English 0700 GMT 08 Aug 06 taken from Opensource Center website <[www.opensource.gov](http://www.opensource.gov)>, accessed 7 Feb 2007.

change in response to events to which Australia may weight differently from the United States. Washington and Canberra will need to remain cognizant of each other's vital interests while pursuing common goals through mutual support and coordination. In that regard, a careful look at the past will yield insights for the future.

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